THE GOSPEL OF MARK
Jan Beute

Mark 1:1 to Mark 8:26

A schematic overview on the first part of Mark's Gospel
Jesus' initial ministry at Galilee

Mark 1 divides roughly into:
- Prologue/Preparation (vv. 1–13):

1. Transition & Proclamation of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14–15)
   - After John imprisoned → Jesus enters Galilee (not Judea, which rejected Him; symbolic of light dawning in darkness—Isa. 9:1–2).
   - Core message: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel."
     - Kingdom = God's rule breaking in (not political; hidden now, future glory).
     - It ties this to the new covenant (resurrected Christ as fulfilment of OT promises; grace over law).
2. Calling the First Disciples (Mark 1:16–20)
   - By the Sea of Galilee (symbol of nations/Gentiles or "other sheep" from the 10 lost tribes).
   - Calls Simon (Peter) & Andrew, then James & John (sons of Zebedee).
     - They immediately leave nets/boats/family → "fishers of men."
     - Not random; prior connection via John the Baptist; portrays responsive "sea people" (lost tribes/Gentiles) vs. resistant Judea.
     - "Immediately" (key Mark word) shows servant urgency.
3. A "Busy Day" in Capernaum: Authority Demonstrated (Mark 1:21–34)
   - Teaching in synagogue (v. 21–22): Astonishes people—authority, not like scribes (Word sharper than sword; Heb. 4:12).
   - Exorcism (v. 23–28): Unclean spirit recognizes Jesus as "Holy One of God"; Jesus silences & casts it out. Fame spreads.
   - Healing Peter's mother-in-law (v. 29–31): Fever leaves; she serves immediately.
   - Evening healings & exorcisms (v. 32–34): Whole city gathers; Jesus heals many, casts out demons (silences them—they know Him).
   - Early morning prayer (v. 35–39): Solitary place; then expands ministry to other towns ("that is why I came").

     Church as light in darkness (Isa. 9:2); Galilee as receptive (10 lost tribes/Celtic roots); demons tied to occult strongholds later confronted in the West.
4. Healing a Leper & Growing Fame (Mark 1:40–45)
   - Leper begs: "If you are willing, you can make me clean."
   - Jesus, moved with compassion, touches him: "I am willing; be clean."
   - Leprosy leaves immediately. Jesus charges silence + priestly offering (testimony).

- Man publishes it → Jesus withdraws to deserted places; crowds still come.
    - Leprosy = sin/decay of old nature. Healing = new creation (2 Cor. 5:17); total cleansing via Christ's work. Ties to Naaman (2 Kings 5), outside-the-camp themes (Heb. 13:13), and Great Day of Atonement (scapegoat/goat for Jehovah).Key Themes for This Section (Galilee "First Act")
- Jesus as Servant (Mark's "ox/calf" symbol): Busy, deed-focused ("immediately" ~40x in Mark); minimum discourse, maximum action.
- Kingdom near → Repent/believe (new covenant grace; OT promises fulfilled in resurrected Christ).
- Authority over teaching, demons, disease, nature, people.
- Galilee symbolism: Light in darkness (Isa. 9); receptive "other family" (10 lost tribes vs. resistant Judah); sea = nations.
- Disciples: Ordinary responders; "fishers of men"; portray Church from fringes.
- Healing/Exorcism: Signs of new creation; confront occult (Celtic/Druid roots later); demons silenced (mystery timing).
- Leper: Typifies sin/old man; touched by grace (5th dispensation); outside-camp reproach (Heb. 13); total cleansing.
- Overall tone: Urgent, compassionate Servant-King; rejection in Judea pushes ministry north; foreshadows expansion to "lost sheep."

Visual Schematic (Simple Outline Table)

Section	**Verses**	**Key Events**	**Emphasis**
Proclamation	1:14–15	Kingdom at hand; repent & believe	New covenant; grace; time fulfilled (resurrection lens)
Calling Disciples	1:16–20	Peter/Andrew, James/John by Sea	Immediate response; "fishers of men"; sea = nations/lost tribes
Capernaum Day	1:21–39	Synagogue teaching, exorcism, healings, prayer, expansion	Authority; busy Servant; light in darkness; demons vs. occult
Leper Healing	1:40–45	Compassionate touch; command to priest	Sin as leprosy; new creation; outside camp; testimony

This "first act" sets up Mark's fast-paced portrait of Jesus as the authoritative, compassionate Servant whose deeds reveal the breaking in of God's kingdom. Rejection in Judea shifts focus to receptive Galilee, hinting at the Gospel's spread beyond Israel (to the "sea"/nations).

Like the other Gospels, the Gospel of Mark is technically anonymous, as the author does not identify himself, The writers of the four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles did not claim credit for their work in the same way that the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) does not bear the name of an author, The Gospel writers and the writer of Acts believed they were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the work was His, It is from the testimony of the early Church Fathers that we know the names and identities of the inspired writers of those books, According to the testimony of the early Fathers of the Church, and most modern Biblical scholars, the inspired writer of the Gospel of St Mark was the son of a Jewish woman and a Roman father, He carried the combined Hebrew and Roman name John Mark, whose surname was Marcus (Acts 12:2, 25; 15:37; 2 Tim, 4:11), Mark was not one of the twelve disciples, Perhaps the only mention of him in the Gospel is shadowy in Mark 14:51–52, As a youth, he may have been part of the larger group of people who followed Jesus, He is thought to be much younger than the other writers of the book, His mother was a prominent follower of Jesus Christ (Acts 12:12), There are five famous Marys in the New Testament, They are: Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene (who is Mary of Bethany), and Mary the mother of James and John, Two other Marys are mentioned in the book of Acts: Mary, the mother of Mark, and Mary of Rome.
Mary the mother of Mark is one of those remarkable women in the New Testament who is mentioned only once, Her house is frequently mentioned in the Bible, and Mary was probably a widow, as it was her house, Luke tells us that many were gathered in Mary’s house in Jerusalem, so we know that it was a large house, Mary must have been wealthy and well known to the disciples.

The Character of the Book of Mark
In my studies of the tabernacle, I mentioned the cherubs and the four living creatures around God’s throne (Rev, 4:7), They are known by their four faces: the face of a lion, of a calf, of a man, and of an eagle. By long tradition, the church has associated one of these ‘faces’ with each of the Gospels, according to the character and message of the particular Gospel. By tradition, the creature that represents the Gospel of Mark is the calf or the ox—a creature of work and service. The Gospel of Mark shows Jesus as the Servant of God. For this reason, the Gospel of Mark is a ‘busy’ book. In this Gospel, Jesus seems the busiest, moving from one event to another. One of the key words in the Gospel is immediately, occurring more than 40 times in Mark. We see Jesus as a servant. In the Gospel of Mark, the emphasis is on the deeds of Jesus more than on the words of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark pictures Christ in action. There is a minimum of discourse and a maximum of deed. Mark is the shortest Gospel of the four, and it takes about one hour to read it.

Mark 1:1
The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It commences with the words ‘in the beginning’, and we can ask what the ‘beginning’ was. Was Mark the first book of the New Testament? Many disagree, as some think it was the book of Matthew. I believe the word ‘beginning’ here is the start of the new covenant, which commenced with Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Mark pictured the resurrected Christ in the first verse of his book and not Jesus. The word ‘beginning’ is translated from the Greek word archē (Strong’s no. 746). It means beginning in a temporal sense: the initial starting point. Figuratively, the idea is first and therefore chief or foremost, having priority because it is ahead of the rest (pre-eminent). The word archē is defined as ‘the beginning’, ‘origin’, or ‘source of action’. We find it several times in the Bible, and we need to study the word in greater detail.

John 1:1–3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

The words ‘In the beginning was the Word’ are confusing to the average Christian, who has no clue how to explain this. The simple reason is that the word ‘Word’ is a metaphor, a figure of speech, in which God is likened to the word. He is the One who speaks to make things happen. He is not the Hebrew letters glued together. God speaks, and His ‘Word’ is His great entity, featuring His character. Whenever God is studied in the Gospel of John, the student says God is love, light, and Spirit—so why not that God is Word? God causes the light to shine in darkness, and in His loving kindness He cares for us. He is a Spirit, so we cannot see Him. The greatest attribute is that God speaks and then things happen. Today God speaks to us via His Son, and if we believe in Him, then things will happen. Generally speaking, Christians believe that the Man Jesus always existed, and I don’t think Mother Mary agrees. When God created all things in the beginning, I don’t think the Man Jesus stood next to Him. If we wish to confirm the pre-existence of Christ Jesus, then we are in the wrong chapter. Remember, we are dealing with a metaphor, and by no means can any figure of speech relay hard-core Biblical truths. The Book of Revelation has many of them, and the Apostle John was the writer. We need to study Mark 1:1, Hebrews 1:1–3 alongside John 1:1–3 to understand the Scriptures better. The Book of Hebrews commences with the words that in the past 4,000 years God spoke to our ancestors (like Abraham) at many different times and in many different ways through the prophets. In these last days (today) He has spoken to us through His Son (the resurrected). God made His Son responsible for everything (creating the new from the old creation). His Son is the one through whom God made the universe. His Son is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact likeness of God’s being. He holds everything together through His powerful Word. After He had cleansed the people from their sins (as the humiliated Jesus), He received the highest position (with His resurrection) to be exalted to the Father in heaven.

The book of Hebrews has so many metaphors, and it is likened to the Book of John. If by any chance the Book of Hebrews is not written by the Apostle Paul, then I believe the writer is the Apostle John. Both books commence

with the same metaphor. The Bible teaches us of God, and where else will we find Him except in His Word? Many find the Word of God too abstract and think they can find God through deep meditation. They go into a deep sleep, seeking the truth with their eyes shut. How absurd, as God is light. God has something to share with us via the promised Messiah. Whenever God does something like creating the heavens and the earth, He speaks. It is like God speaking 10 times in Genesis 1. In the Book of John, God speaks to us, and His message is the resurrected Christ. It is important to grasp that the Word (God) became flesh (resurrected Christ) and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Truly, God descended to earth to become Jesus, and before God was born at Bethlehem, there was no humiliated Jesus in heaven. There was a great crisis in heaven, but it was the only means to redeem our fallen world, to create the new from the old.

John knew and saw and heard and touched Jesus with his hands (1 John 1:1). He had flesh and blood. He was not a ghost appearing and vanishing. He ate and drank and got tired, and John knew Him very well. It took John more than three years to figure out the fullness of Jesus. He wishes his readers to grasp who Jesus is when they study the first three verses of the book. He wants us to grasp the real deity of Jesus, to get a clear picture early in his Gospel.

The very first words from John's pen reveal the real identity of Jesus: God and no one else became flesh and dwelt among us. So there is no mistake. Jesus Christ was indeed God, and He laid down His life for us (Jn. 15:13). Our Saviour created the universe.

The Apostle John learned that the words of Jesus are the true words of God, in His coming, working, teaching, dying, and resurrection. He proved to be the final and decisive message of God. When Jesus stood in front of Pilate, He said, 'I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth' (Jn. 18:37). He is the truthful, living way (Jn. 14:6).

Later, the Apostle John describes Jesus' glorious return: 'And He wore a garment soaked with blood, and His name is called The Word of God' (Rev. 19:13). When Christ returns to earth, He will be called 'the Word of God'. Two verses later, John says, 'from His mouth comes a sharp sword' (Rev. 19:15). In other words, Christ strikes the nations by the power of His Word; the words of God He spoke on earth are the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The power of this Word is so united with Christ Himself that John concludes by saying He is the sword of God, the very Word of God.

So when John starts writing his Gospel, he has a panoramic view of all the revelations, all the truths, all the witness, all the glory, all the light, all the words that come out of Jesus' mouth—His teaching and His sufferings. His final summary is: He is 'the Word'—the first, final, ultimate, decisive, absolutely true and reliable Word.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This is a straightforward statement saying that the Word of God dwelt inside the humiliated Jesus who carried our sins. He was God, humiliated to be clothed in a body like ours. Philippians 2 says Jesus made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and

was made in the likeness of men. The eternal God clothed Himself with our human nature, and He was born at Bethlehem and lived at Nazareth, to die at Calvary on our behalf! Once He became man, He was humiliated to the ground, bearing the shame of our sins. ‘Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself.’ He never seems to stop in His descent until He comes to the lowest point—obedience unto death, and that death is the most shameful of all—‘even the death of the cross.’ We cannot grasp the height from which He came, and we cannot fathom the depth to which He descended. There was a tremendous rift between heaven and the great shame of His death. Remember, our Lord did not resurrect as the humiliated—No, He resurrected as the glorified God, and a name is given to Him that is above any other name in heaven or on earth. How glorious. The resurrected Christ reflects the image of God, and He is the fullness of His Person. We have a humiliated Jesus who was God taking on flesh, who willingly humbled Himself to die on the cross. He was resurrected as the Son of God, and remember, in the Bible the word son means an heir. He became the Heir of God’s throne. When John pictured our Lord in the first three verses of this chapter, as Mark did, he looked upon the resurrected Christ who rose from the dead, and not the humiliated Jesus who was cursed to die for our sins. If Jesus Christ is not God, He could not accomplish your salvation (Heb. 2:14–15). If you throw away the deity of Jesus Christ, you throw away your soul and with it all your joy in the ages to come.

John says: ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, the One who created the universe. All things were made through Him.’ I believe God Himself (in Person) did redeem the world, taking on human flesh. He was born empty at Bethlehem, and during His tender years He studied the Word of God. He took our sins upon Himself, and He had to die, as the punishment of sin is death. When our Lord died on the cross of Calvary, Satan thought he had everything in his bag. He was shocked, realising that Christ rose from the dead. With His resurrection, Christ is given a name above any other name, as part of a total new creation. The law and everything it entails is part of the ‘old’ and it was nailed to the cross. How profound and simple.

Christ is the true Light. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name (John 1:10–12).

All the people like Abraham who heeded God in faith, He promised them they would be called children of God. They lived before Jesus’ time, but they will be resurrected on the ‘last day’. If we accept Him today, then we have eternal life and we don’t need to wait like Abraham. We who accept Him accept eternal life. God fulfilled His promises, and the resurrected Christ was the first to partake of the new creation.

The Apostle John opens his letters differently from the Gospel of John. That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we saw, and our hands touched, concerning the Word of life—and the life was revealed, and we have seen,

and testify, and declare to you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was revealed to us; that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1–3).
The wording is different, as in this letter we are called the children of God. It happened since Christ's resurrection from the dead. In the Old Testament God promised it, but now it is real. When Adam was created, God inhaled the breath of life into him. When our Lord was resurrected, He breathed eternal life into His disciples, and they did receive the Spirit. We are dependent on God and the new covenant. They received the Spirit with Christ's resurrection, and I think it was given to them even earlier than on the day of Pentecost. It was when Christ rose from the dead.
Since Christ resurrected from the dead, His new life is totally part of us; we received something very special, hailed as true citizens of heaven. The sin we did yesterday and today is not an issue, and it is dealt with by our High Priest. The quicker we forget them, the better. So our energy can be spent serving the Lord, not rehearsing the daily sins we commit. Judging our sins will provoke a negative attitude, tying us down like a yoke on our shoulders (Acts 15:10). Our sins will never be remembered; so why worry about them? God came to earth with the prime reason to free us from every sin and the law, to offer eternal life.
God will never reckon with our old nature, as everything became new for us. We need to see ourselves as God sees us. During the time of the Old Testament, the Israelites needed to comply with the law, and if they transgressed, God forgave them. We are not tied down to the old covenant or the laws of Moses, and we are totally dependent on God's grace. We can mature without the constant burden of the law.
Our rebirth is not dependent on whether we are born of blood, the will of the flesh, or of the will of man (when we were born on earth), but our new rebirth is part of God's doing (John 1:13). Born of blood, the will of the flesh, or of the will of man is a threefold parallelism. With our rebirth, we are born into heaven, and it has a far greater repercussion than our birth on earth. It comes from God, and it is accomplished via His Word.
The Word of God made the heavens and the earth, and the very same Word caused the new life to develop in our hearts. Imagine what it could do for us who believe—it is limitless.
The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw His glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).
The Word made flesh (John 1:14) is tied to the word 'Gospel' in Mark 1:1. Let me explain.
The Hebrew word for 'Gospel' is basar. What does good news and flesh have in common? The word 'flesh' actually has two meanings, translated as either the Gospel (good news) or flesh. Yes, the good news of the Gospel (basar, noun) is that our Lord is revealed in the flesh (basar, verb). Remember, there are no vowels in the Hebrew of the Bible. The Old Testament believers like Abraham need to wait until the 'last day', and then only will the truth be revealed to them. God spoke, and the resurrected Christ became flesh. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus is not

an issue here, but rather the Gospel is that a Son is given to us. It says in Isaiah 40:9: Go up a high mountain, Zion. Tell the good news! Call out with a loud voice, Jerusalem. Tell the good news! Raise your voice without fear. Tell the cities of Judah: “Here is your God!” The ‘good news’ is the time since Christ’s resurrection from the dead and not His humiliated birth at Bethlehem. It was promised on paper, and once it materialised, the Word had hands and feet, and it became flesh. What it says—that the word became flesh—is really saying that everything God promised in the Old Testament is now fulfilled. The Apostle Paul says God had already promised this good news through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:2). This is no mistake, as He later writes: God, having spoken many times and in many ways in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last times spoken unto us by His Son (Heb. 1:1–2). Indeed, the Word did become flesh, speaking to us today. Mark had the audacity to name Jesus as Christ from the start (1:1), as he visualised the glorified and not the humiliated.

During the Old Testament times, the promises of the Son were guaranteed in the Word of God, but with Christ’s resurrection it became real, meaning the flesh is revealed. The Gospel is the good news that the Son appeared with His resurrection. God spoke in the Old Testament, and His last prophet was John the Baptist. We are different, as we are knowledgeable of the flesh or the good news, since the time when Christ has risen from the dead. Now God only speaks to us via His Son. On earth Jesus was humiliated, as we can gather from the book of Isaiah (53:2–3). It says He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Today is different, as we can look at the glorified Son full of grace and truth. Jesus had a humiliated birth at Bethlehem, coming to live under the law. John 1:14 addresses the resurrection of Christ and not His birth. He became flesh with His resurrection from the dead. After the resurrection of Christ, the Apostle Peter was fearless, addressing the people with greater courage and boldness. A few days earlier, Peter was frightened by the sight of a servant maid, disowning our Lord. On the day of Pentecost, Peter was confident, and he was not silenced as prior to Christ’s resurrection, when he was told to hide our Lord’s true identity (Matt. 16:20). During the Old Testament times, things were hidden, but not since Christ is revealed. Grace and truth reign today and not the law. That is why it says His glory is full of grace and truth.

The mission of our Lord is hidden in the Old Testament, and it is not in the open. Today it is revealed.

The Lamb is the resurrected Christ, and He received the glory upon His resurrection.

The Apostle Paul said the eternal life we are part of was promised before time began (Titus 1:1–3). This wondrous grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9). The hope of eternal salvation was known even before the world began, and Noah and Abraham were justified because of their faith. God said Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8). That grace appeared via His

resurrection and not with His birth at Bethlehem. During the Old Testament times, the law ruled, but today the law is derelict, as the outstanding feature of our time is grace. Grace and law are total opposites, and they will never blend.

God in His grace overlooked the many sins due to His forbearance, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). The Apostle Paul says we speak the wisdom of God, hidden in a mystery that God determined before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers like Satan, Herod, or Pilate understood it. If they had known God's secret plan, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:7–8).

Satan was totally oblivious of God's secret plan, and he was fooled, thinking he defeated Jesus with His death, but he had no idea what was happening. Since there are a lot of prophecies about the Son of God in the Old Testament, should not Satan have gathered that Jesus was going to die on the cross to cleanse each of our sins? Satan is not omnipotent, and he had no idea what God was planning; but if he had known, I am sure he would have prevented the crucifixion of Jesus, to die a natural death. God sacrificed many pieces on the chessboard to finally proclaim Satan checkmate. However, we need to know why he is called Satan. His pride blinded him, thinking he could challenge the living God. That kind of pride is debilitating. He thought he killed the living God, knowing God's throne was in a real crisis to rid the earth of sin and the law. Psalm 2 says that the one who rules the heavens will laugh.

I will try to reconstruct the life of Mark, the writer of this book. His name keeps popping up in Scripture. Our first introduction to Mark is in Acts 12. These events take place during the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem (12:3). At that time, Peter was miraculously released from prison, and he went to the house of Mary (12:12). Because there are a number of Marys in the early church, Luke has to distinguish which one he is referring to, so he identifies her as the mother of Mark. Luke also tells us that many were gathered in Mary's house to pray for Peter (12:12).

In the English Bible, his name is given as 'John', and in Hebrew his name can be translated as 'Yohanan', which means 'gracious'. His Latin name was 'Marcus'. This may indicate that he was a Roman citizen. The Apostle Paul calls him Mark (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Phlm. 24). Luke uses both names together three times (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37), his Hebrew name alone twice (Acts 13:5, 13), and his Latin name alone only once (Acts 15:39).

Early church history suggests that Jesus and His disciples had their last Passover meal together at the home of Mary the mother of Mark. Mark later would record the instructions that Jesus gave Peter: 'Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'"' (Mark 14:14). The master of the house would be Mark's father. In Acts 12, the house belonged to Miriam. We can conclude that Mark's father died shortly afterwards, maybe as part of the persecution of the church. It indicates that Mark lived in a well-to-do house in the Upper City of Jerusalem, and it was a meeting place for the early Christians.

We are told that the house had an upper room (Mark 14:25; Luke 22:12). At least one room was large enough to hold many people for a prayer meeting (Acts 12:12). At one time, the house had a male servant (Mark 14:13) as well as a female servant, Rhoda (Acts 12:14).

Mark was constantly surrounded with Christian influences, and I am sure he met Jesus as He came in for His last Passover with His disciples. After the ascension of the Lord Jesus, the disciples returned to the upper room for a prayer meeting (Acts 1:12–14). The house seems to be one of the places where the early church gathered in Jerusalem. When Peter was miraculously released from prison in Acts 12, he went to the prayer gathering at Mary's house, and Rhoda recognised his voice instantly. This seems to indicate that she knew him personally and that Peter was a frequent visitor to the house. When Mark wrote the Gospel, he records the events that took place in Gethsemane. One event indicates that he was an eyewitness to what transpired on that Passover night, and another event only he would have known about and recorded.

After the Passover meal, Jesus and His disciples left the Upper Room and went to the Temple and then on to Gethsemane on the eastern slopes of the Kidron Valley. Judas led the Temple guards to the place where Jesus was, and they arrested Him. Mark writes that one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear (Mark 14:47). Mark did not identify the one who wielded the sword and cut off the ear. The Apostle John, another eyewitness to the event, identifies Peter as the one who cut off the deputy high priest's ear (John 18:10–11). This indicates that Mark was an eyewitness to this event and tells us specifically what happened in the garden. After Jesus was arrested and His disciples fled (Mark 14:43–50), Mark records: 'Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked' (Mark 14:51–52). Mark had not heard about this incident from Peter because he had already fled the scene. Only Mark knew who the first—and only—streaker in the Bible was; it was himself! Mark apparently went to bed after the family Passover meal, but when he heard Jesus and His disciples departing, his curiosity was aroused. He threw a linen cloth around his body and followed at a distance. Later, he recounts his story.

As a teenager, Mark had godly Jewish parents who were interested and involved in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He knew the giants of the faith like Peter, the apostles, and his cousin from Cyprus, Barnabas (Col. 4:10). Peter calls Mark 'my son' (1 Pet. 5:13). This could be an indication that Peter was the one who had the privilege of sharing the Gospel with him. I am sure Mark heard Peter recount the stories of Jesus over and over again to different audiences. He knew them well, and the Holy Spirit directed him when he wrote the Gospel of Mark (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:21).

Barnabas and Saul went up to Jerusalem at the beginning of the famine in AD 44 and brought relief from the church in Antioch. When they finished delivering the money and goods, they returned to Antioch and brought Mark with them (Acts 12:25). Mark ministered in Antioch for three years, in which time Barnabas and Paul had opportunities to observe him.

The Holy Spirit separated Barnabas and Saul to the work to which He had called them. After fasting and praying, the saints in Antioch laid hands on Barnabas, Paul, and probably Mark, and sent them on their way in the year AD 47.

Barnabas and Saul realised they would need help, and they thought Mark would be the ideal person to take along. At an early age of about 35, Mark joined them on his first missionary journey. Luke described Mark as an assistant (Acts 13:5). Their first destination was the island of Cyprus. They went through the island to Paphos (13:6), the capital of the island, visiting the Jewish communities as well as relatives of Barnabas—and probably distant relatives of Mark—preaching the gospel to both Jewish people and Gentiles on the island. The proconsul, Sergius Paulus, came to faith in the Lord Jesus (13:12), and their ministry impacted the island greatly. By tradition, Cyprus became the first country governed by a Christian. It is difficult to establish why Mark departed and returned to Jerusalem. Others suggested Mark was a disciple of Peter, who was a missionary to the circumcision (Gal. 2:7–9). Maybe Mark lacked courage to face the wave of persecutions, leading to his unfaithfulness—who knows?—but the Apostle Paul was very upset with Mark's commitment to the work of the Lord (Acts 15:37–38). Paul would later write that faithfulness was mandatory for the Christian life (1 Cor. 4:2). On Paul and Barnabas's first missionary journey, they spent at least two years in Galatia preaching the gospel and planting churches (Acts 13:14–14:25). There was a strong dispute between Paul and Barnabas over whether to take Mark with them on this second missionary journey or not. In the end, they decided to go their separate ways: Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus, and Paul and Silas went to Galatia (Acts 15:36–41). Scripture is silent on the activities of Mark for the following ten or eleven years.

The next time we read of Mark is him visiting the Apostle Paul, who was under house arrest and awaiting trial. Paul, writing an epistle to the church at Colossae, sent greetings from several brethren who were with him in Rome, including Mark. He instructs the believers in Colossae to welcome Mark if he comes to the city during his travels (Col. 4:10). Mark apparently was planning a trip to Asia Minor, perhaps to help Timothy in the work in Ephesus or to continue to Alexandria. Along with the letter to the church, Paul sends a personal letter to Philemon, the patron and possibly an elder in the church at Colossae. At the close of the letter, he sends greetings to Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (Phlm. 24). Paul and Mark were reconciled to each other.

The Apostle Paul was released from house arrest after appearing before Nero and soon went on a fourth missionary journey. He was re-arrested and landed in prison in Rome. This time, Nero was not as lenient as the first time they met at Paul's first defence (2 Tim. 4:16). Paul wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy, who was engaged in evangelistic work in Ephesus, and told him: 'Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry' (2 Tim. 4:11). After Paul was re-arrested, he again called for Mark to come to Rome with Timothy. His relationship with Paul was restored in the end.

The Apostle Peter wrote: She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son (1 Pet. 5:13). Coptic Christians believe that ‘Babylon’ in 1 Peter 5:13 refers to the old Roman fortress at Cairo in Egypt, which the Romans called ‘Babylon’. Tradition says that Mark embarked on a missionary journey to Egypt and was buried in Alexandria. An Egyptian Christian, or any Christian in the Middle East, is known as a Coptic Christian, and the mere fact that they are Christians living in a predominantly Muslim part of the world is reason enough for them to be persecuted more than most Christians in the West. The Copts are believed to have originated in the city of Alexandria, Egypt. Mark is thought to be the founder of the Coptic Church. Many Jews from Alexandria were in Jerusalem, where they had a synagogue (Acts 6:9), at the time of Stephen’s martyrdom. Alexandria possessed a famous library of 700,000 volumes, which was burned by the Saracens (AD 642). It was here that the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek. It is called the Septuagint version, from the tradition that seventy learned men were engaged in completing it. The Coptic Churches rely immensely on the Gospel of Mark. The Copts have lived with this persecution for about 2,000 years. They have seen their churches regularly burned down, and they have seen many of their members die at the hands of radical Muslims who see Christians as infidls opposed to the Islamic faith. They are our brothers and sisters, and today they endure great hardships at the hands of ISIS. I don’t believe that Babylon is Rome (as proposed by the Roman Catholic Church) or that it was the old Babylon that was run-down.

Mark 1:2
As it is written in the Prophets: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. ”
Concerning this salvation, the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching for who or what kind of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, pointed to, when He predicted the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that would follow them (1 Pet. 1:10–12).
What relationship does the Old Testament have to the New Testament? Is Christ found only in the new covenant, or was He also known in the old covenant? There are many Christians today who overlook the Old Testament, dismissing it as obsolete. Even those who admit it is important spend the majority of their time studying the New Testament. We must understand that the Old Testament is for us today. It speaks of Christ, and if we look for Him there, we shall find Him.
In 1 Peter 1:10–12, Peter will direct our attention to the past, in which salvation was prophesied by the prophets. We need to attempt to understand the amount of revelation the Old Testament prophets had concerning the salvation that we now have in Christ.
Concerning this salvation. Whenever the Apostle Peter mentioned salvation in this chapter, new thoughts were triggered in his mind. It causes his mind to go back to the Old Testament and the prophets who had knowledge of this salvation. Verse 10 seems to cover every aspect of salvation: past, present, and future. The Old Testament prophets foretold

the grace that would come. Christians today are in a position far superior to that of the Old Testament prophets. Today Christians have the full light of the gospel. Old Testament saints were saved by grace through faith in the Messiah to come, but they lived in the Old Testament age of types and shadows.

The prophets sought and searched diligently. The prophets saw the salvation we possess today only at a distance and then only dimly. They prophesied of this great display of grace when the fullness of salvation in Christ would come, but they did not understand all they knew about it. The prophets scrutinised the revelation made to them, which was put down in writing. They gave intelligent research and concentrated study, prayer, and meditation to their own prophecies about the salvation which every Christian now possesses. They did not thoroughly understand all their revelation; therefore, they had to be diligent students of the Word to get the meaning of their own prophecies. The prophets not only studied their own prophecies; they also studied the prophecies of other prophets. In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years (Dan. 9:2). The prophets in their own generation were the only ones who were oriented in time and with reference to eternity because they were biblically grounded. The lesson we learn from this is that those who know Scripture and apply it are the truly oriented people in this world, but they will also be looked upon as odd by the world in the same way that the prophets were ridiculed in their respective generations. If the prophets needed to study the Word, how much more do we need to study it! The main reason the Apostle Peter wrote this letter was to encourage the Asian Christians who were persecuted. Just as the unbelieving Israelites persecuted the prophets, so Christians will be persecuted in this world. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matt. 5:12). Peter wants these Christians to highly value their great salvation so they will be encouraged and able to endure their trials with patience.

Who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching for who or what kind of time. We who live in the age of grace—the church, or the time of the gospel—are a very unthankful people and take our salvation for granted. Men of old were willing to sweat blood to know something of the salvation we now experience in full. For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it (Matt. 13:17). For I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them (Luke 10:24). If we Christians could only get the same love for Scripture as did the prophets.

The prophets' predictions about Christ (1:11). This is a very difficult translation, and no one can be dogmatic as to its precise meaning. It may mean 'when and under what circumstances' or 'who and under what

circumstances’. The rendering of the New American Standard Bible is probably correct when it says ‘what person or time’. The prophets diligently inquired as to what person was being spoken of in their prophecies. They sought to know all they could about the Messiah: who He would be, what His character would be, and the nature of the work He would perform. The prophets also sought to know when these things would happen and under what circumstances—the conditions of the world He would meet. These prophets were not necessarily learned theologians but men filled with the Holy Spirit who had a desire for the arrival of this great period of grace. They longed for nothing more than to see this period, even though they saw it dimly and only in part.

The Spirit of Christ within them was indicating. It says the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, the actual Spirit of the pre-incarnate Christ. Somehow Christ, in Spirit, was in the Old Testament prophets. These men were controlled by the Spirit of Christ and, as they studied their written prophecies, things were made increasingly clear. The word indicating means ‘to make clear’. These prophets, in progressive revelation, became clearer on the death and exaltation of Messiah and the new period of grace.

As He predicted the sufferings of Christ. It was the Spirit of Christ who enabled these prophets to make their predictions. The Apostle Peter says the Old Testament speaks of Christ.

For David says of Him [Christ], “I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken” (Acts 2:25). And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women also had said; but Him they did not see. And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:24–27). We must remember that the only Scriptures the early Christians had were from the Old Testament, and in these Scriptures they found Christ. Jesus Christ was clearly revealed in the tabernacle. There is a very close relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Here are some prophecies which tell us much about the Messiah: place of birth (Mic. 5:2) ; supernatural birth (Isa. 7:14) ; eternal sonship (Ps. 2:7) ; Saviour (Isa. 53:5–6, 12) ; prophet (Deut. 18:15) ; priest (Ps. 110:4) ; king (2 Sam. 7:12–16; Isa. 2:1–4) ; betrayal (Ps. 41:9) ; falsely accused (Ps. 5:11) ; spat upon (Isa. 50:6) ; no broken bones (Ps. 22:17) ; pierced (Ps. 22:16–17) ; die with the wicked (Isa. 53:9) ; sacrifice for sin (Isa. 53:5–6, 12) ; and buried in a rich man’s tomb (Isa. 53:9). The Bible had over three hundred prophecies fulfilled literally, and there are hundreds more to be fulfilled concerning the Second Advent of Christ. These fulfilments of prophecy are no accident. The Bible will stand the test of time.

And the glories to follow. The prophets saw that there would be glory which would be the result of His suffering, but they did not clearly see what it would be. They may have had some broad outlines on the resurrection, ascension, second coming, and His reign upon the throne of

David, but the details and logical order were not clear to them. I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither will You allow Your Holy One to see the pit (Ps. 16:8–11). The prophets saw that Messiah would suffer (Ps. 22; Isa. 53) and reign (Ps. 2, 16, 110), but they did not understand all they knew about it. They could not grasp how this reigning Messiah could suffer. This was a mystery to them, and it was hidden until the First Advent of Christ. The issue of a suffering–reigning Messiah was so confusing that some Jewish rabbis thought there were two Messiahs: one a suffering Messiah and the other a glorified Messiah. The prophets most certainly did not see the two thousand years which have intervened between the First and Second Advents.

‘It was revealed to them.’ The prophets, after much laborious study, received some positive, concrete answers. Some things they never understood, but in other things they received some answers.

‘That they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things.’ After much study, the prophets concluded that this salvation in Christ and the period of grace was not for them but for others in another period. They were only stewards and administrators of the salvation others would enjoy. The full benefit of those things which they wrote were for future ages. These prophecies were prepared for the church, for you and me as Christians, who have the full revelation of Christ and His salvation.

‘Which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.’ This salvation, written about in the Old Testament and known only partially by the prophets, was preached unto us by the Apostles and other good news preachers. This kind of preaching was made possible when the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven on the Day of Pentecost to give Christians the power to witness for Christ. ‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’ Acts 1:8. The early Christian preachers used the Old Testament Scriptures to back up the Gospel they were preaching. Look for Christ in the Old Testament and it becomes a living book.

‘Things into which angels long to look.’ This salvation is not only valuable because it was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets, but it is valuable because angels long to know something of it. The angels stoop down or stretch their necks to get a close glimpse of the salvation God has bestowed on His church. They learn about God’s grace, mercy, love and forgiveness from observing us. They stoop down and stare intently at our lives to learn about the salvation we as Christians possess. ‘To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God right now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.’ Eph. 3:8-10. ‘For I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a

spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.' 1 Cor. 4:9. 'In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.' Luke 15:10. The angels are not only learning about God's sanctifying grace and mercy. No, they are observing how we respond to suffering as Christians, for suffering is a definite part of our salvation process. So remember, the next time you groan and complain about some minor suffering, that the angels are learning about God from you. You are a witness to angels concerning God's grace and mercy. Hundreds of prophecies were literally fulfilled with Christ's first coming to earth. There are still hundreds of prophecies yet to be fulfilled concerning His imminent return. They will be just as literally fulfilled. Then He will return as a Judge of those who refuse Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Mark 1:3-4

'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. "'

JOHN THE BAPTIST

John came baptising in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. John, who baptised the people, made it clear that he is not Elijah, neither is he the prophet. The most important point: he did claim to be the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy.

A lone voice in the wilderness is defined as someone who expresses an idea or opinion that is not popular. John the Baptist was a lonely voice and the people did not heed him, but he attracted a vast crowd, baptising them. John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt—the same attire that Elijah wore (2 Kings 1:8) —emphasising the similarity of his mission to that of Elijah's. John's message to the people is to prepare, get right and repent.

As John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah's first coming, Elijah the Prophet will return to do his work of restoration and be the forerunner of the Messiah's second coming to earth. John the Baptist was Elijah in a certain sense according to Jesus:

John said, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord," as Isaiah the prophet said.' John 1:23. John's ministry blends the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ. If Israel would have responded positively to John and received the kingdom, then John would have been Elijah. God in His foreknowledge knew Israel would not receive the kingdom, so He sent John as a type of Elijah to let Israel know that everything was finally ready for that kingdom to be set up.

John the Baptist is not the promised Elijah

The return of Elijah is mentioned in Malachi 4:5-6: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. '

Scripture states the return of Elijah is before the Day of the Lord, which is another reference to the great tribulation the Jewish nation will endure. In Luke 4:18, when Jesus stood up in the temple, He quoted Isaiah 61:1-2

and stopped in the Scripture at ‘proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord’. He purposely did not read the part about the day of vengeance of our God, which is reserved for it is the tribulation period. It is at that time Elijah will come, literally, bodily to earth to preach, before the second coming of Christ, the Day of the Lord.
The confusion takes place when John the Baptist is believed to be Elijah. Elijah was never promised before the first coming of the Christ, but before the second coming, during the great tribulation or during Daniel’s 70th week. In the same way, Jesus did not set up His kingdom with His first coming, but came to be a sacrificial lamb.
A forerunner was predicted before the first coming of the Messiah in Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3-5. This is what was fulfilled by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:1-6; 11:7-10; and John 1:23. John the Baptist fulfilled those prophecies before the first coming, but he was not Elijah.
In typology, John came ‘in the spirit and power’ of Elijah who has come and is yet to come.
There will be some similarities, but not the exact likeness. In other words, he was a type; his ministry was a type. He introduces Christ to the Jews who were anticipating Him. Malachi wrote of both messengers, one for the first coming and another for the second. Each would have similarities. How did Israel respond?‘
But I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. 13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.’ Matt. 17:12-13.
With John’s ministry, all that the prophets spoke of could have been fulfilled. Everything was ready and the chess pieces were on the board. However, Israel has a history of killing the prophets. Acts 7:51-52.
Jesus is saying He too will suffer in their hands.
After Jesus revealed His glory to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-9), His disciples probed the Lord Jesus with many questions. ‘And His disciples asked Him, why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? 11 And He answered and said, Elijah is coming and will restore all things; 12 but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands. 13 Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.’ Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13.
Jesus told His disciples two things—that Elijah is coming again, and that Elijah had come already. He went on to explain that Elijah’s past coming would have been fulfilled by John the Baptist, but then again the Jewish nation refused him. Instead, they put him in prison and Herod beheaded him. Following this explanation, Jesus predicted His own demise with the words, ‘so also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands’. Who is ‘their’? It was the Jewish leadership led by the Sanhedrin and the Roman power personified by Pilate. The disciples failed to comprehend any of this. Luke 18:31-34. Jesus’ disciples were not the only ones who did not understand what was going on. John the Baptist himself was puzzled. Matt. 11:1-3. He knew he was the herald of the Messiah. But if Jesus was

the Messiah and he was the prophesied forerunner, why was he in Herod's jail? That seemed the last place he should be if he was the King's messenger and Jesus was about to establish His Kingdom. Jesus' reply confirmed via His deeds (Matt. 11:4-19) that He was the Messiah. But how or when the kingdom would be established was not revealed to John.

When will the real Elijah appear?

The Scriptures indicate that the apostles expected Jesus to return in their lifetime and establish His Kingdom. But Jesus intimated that such would not be the case. Luke 19:11-27; Acts 1:6-7. Since Israel rejected her Messiah, the prophesied Messianic Kingdom was delayed. It has been delayed for almost 2,000 years. During this time, God has created and brought into being the Church, the body of Christ.

The ascended Lord revealed to Paul the 'secret' of the body of Christ, the Church. When the body of Christ is complete, God will remove it from the earth and focus His attention once again upon national Israel. During this period of time, God will fulfil the prophesied final seven years of Daniel's 70th week. According to Daniel's 70th week (Dan. 9:24-27), the time is allotted to Israel from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Messiah. After 69 weeks or 483 years, the Messiah would be 'cut off' and 'have nothing'. This prophecy documented the nation's rejection of the Messiah. The remaining time span is thus one week or seven years. These seven years are the final years of Israel's history on earth prior to the Lord's return to establish His Messianic Kingdom. During these seven years, the Antichrist will manifest himself as the false Messiah and God will pour out His wrath in judgment upon a Christ-rejecting, evil world.

Elijah will come, just as Jesus prophesied. Matt. 23:39. With this future appearance of Elijah, he will fulfil all the prophecies related to him regarding the nation. National Israel will repent and accept Jesus as the Messiah. Zech. 12:10, 13:6. In Revelation 11:3-13, John gave an account of two 'witnesses'. These witnesses are not specifically identified, but it is certain that one of them will be Elijah in light of Malachi's prophecy. One of the interesting facts of Scripture is that Elijah never died. He was taken by God in a whirlwind. 2 Kings 2:1-11. The two witnesses will reprise Elijah's powers to call down fire and to prevent rain. The other witness will probably be Moses. The Lord Himself buried Moses (Deut. 34:5-8) and Satan disputed with Michael about Moses' body. Jude 9. There's more to this than meets the eye and likely has to do with a future reappearance of Moses

At the end of seven years, Jesus will return to deliver Israel and establish the Messianic Kingdom. John the Baptist could have fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of Elijah if the nation of Israel would have repented. If they had repented, the prophecy 'restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers' (Mal. 4:5-6) would have been fulfilled. Since all prophecy will be fulfilled (because the Scripture cannot be broken), a future day remains for Elijah. In his second appearance, national Israel will repent and accept Jesus as the Messiah. As a result, as Paul wrote, 'all Israel will be saved.' Rom. 11:26.

John the Baptist's diet and clothing

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Matt. 3:4.

The idea of a garment is very important in the Bible. Adam and Eve were naked, and their self-fashioned garments were not good enough in God's eyes, and indeed betrayed that they had disobeyed Him. A man-made garment is, in a way, a type or a shadow of the person wearing it. It has a metaphorical implication. The entire law of Moses is meant to illustrate to mankind that we are not capable of attaining unto God's righteousness, and our clothing will never attain God's approval. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God gave them skins to cover up with. Gen. 3:21. To get those skins, some animal had to die. In other words, God sacrificed an animal to cover their sin. From the beginning, God has declared that the payment for sin is death, and blood had to be shed to redeem us from sin. Anything 'man-made' will not do, and God also commanded that an altar to Him should be built with stones that have not been touched by the tools of men, nor hewed or carved. This is all significant to why John the Baptist was wearing camel's hair. John the Baptist is somehow related to the camel, bearing a message to us.

Perhaps the most famous and widely misunderstood hyperbole in the Bible is found in Matthew 19:24, Mark 10:25, Luke 18:25. '. . . it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' By definition, a hyperbole is an exaggeration to make or reinforce a point.

Traditionally, it has been said that there was a gate in the walls of Jerusalem called the 'Needle's Eye,' through which an unburdened camel could just squeeze through with great difficulty. Unfortunately, this interpretation is simply not true, as there was never such a gate in Jerusalem called the 'needle's eye'.

After all, it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and that was precisely Jesus' point. Equally, it is impossible for any person who trusts his riches to enter the kingdom. It's a mere miracle for any rich person relying on his riches to be saved. This hyperbole has a positive message for our time of waiting:

The Hebrew word for a camel is the letter gimel (ג) and it is the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The letter originally looked like a camel. The numerical value is 3, a prime number that cannot be divided.

The letter gimel expresses important ideas, thoughts, or things. Graphically, it is represented in a triangle. Now let's study the word needle. Qoph (ק) means an eye of a needle. Jesus used an illustration of a camel (3) going through the eye of a needle (100). Jesus looked at them and said, 'for mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.' Mark 10:24-27.

It is just as impossible for sinful man to go through to the other side (heaven) as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Jesus said that He alone can make this happen.

Now, interestingly, in this parable the needle in this phrase is qoph or 100. It is known as our letter Q and if it is written correctly it is like an object piercing a very large needle. It is easier for a camel (3) to enter the needle (100) than a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Now, a needle or a 100 has to do with entering the kingdom of God and a camel (3) will not enter the needle (100) as the sum is an endless 33.3333333. So the 3 cannot be divided into the 100. The camel pictures a believer who is heading for the kingdom and a camel can easily traverse the desert, as he is not that dependent on what he drinks or eats.
Camels can go up to seven months in the desert without drinking water. During such a time, they may lose nearly half of their body weight. They store fat in their humps, and by the way it is not filled with water. As a camel goes without food, its hump starts to shrink. If a camel stays hungry long enough, then its hump may disappear.
So if the camel doesn't store water in its hump, where does he store it? Very thirsty camels can drink up to 100 litres of water during a single visit to the well. There's no evidence, though, that camels can store water for long periods of time anywhere in their bodies. Camels are just very efficient at using water, and they're well-adapted for dehydration. Its blood cells are also tiny enough to keep circulating as the camel's blood thickens from dehydration—but elastic enough to hold lots of water. If a thirsty camel finds an oasis, its red blood cells might balloon to more than twice their size.
Thus, the camels are tough enough to easily escort us through the desert and this pictures us or any believer crossing a barren desert void of life; that is not easily crossed. The reason is the camel has the reserve, the water or the Word of God and the fat on his hump is the earthly blessings we are endowed with. The fat surrounding the entrails suggests man's inner strength, his hope and his future expectations. Lev. 7. The camel can easily traverse the desert and this once reflected Israel's history when they safely crossed the 40-year journey in a desert to enter the land of Canaan. We will safely enter the new heaven and earth and we don't need to be frightened. If we are in the kingdom then we will meet the King and He is tied to the number 100. When Abraham was 100 years old, then Isaac is born, and I will not be surprised if they both share the same birthday. Incidentally, Christ is Abraham's seed and each believer shares this asset.
This happened at the appointed time, just when God said it would. Gen. 21:2,5.
Again, 99 is $3^2 \times 11$ and the many 3's confers a promise that is visible in our minds, something that is drawn on paper. It is sketched in our minds but it is not fulfilled. We are familiar with the 3rd dispensation that commenced with Abraham and once it is tangible then it becomes a 4. The camel implies a promise and what could it be? It spells that we will enter the kingdom and the number 99 or the camel assures us we will reach the 100 to embrace the promise. Surely the camel will secure our passage to reach our final destination. Whenever God speaks, it entails the future, as Isaiah told us.
Only God can foretell the future even before it happens. Everything He plans will happen, for He does whatever pleases Him. Isa. 46:10. To share the things of the past or the present is not difficult for us to grasp, but only God can foretell the future. He is not captured with the dimension of time and He is the only true God. Abraham was 99 years old and when

God did speak with him, concerning the future. When Abraham turned 100, then his promises were tangible.
Once we grasp this, then the following parable so much easier to understand. We need the 100 to enter our promised heritage. ‘What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.’ Matt. 18:12-14.
The honey and locust
The food of John the Baptist has a similar symbolic meaning. Try to study the following foodstuff in the Bible as meat, bread, milk, wine and water, and do some searches on the internet if you need to. You will soon notice that the Bible often mentions food in such a way that it sounds like food for the flesh, but is really referring to food for the spirit. An example would be, obviously, that Jesus said His body would be broken like the bread, and that one must eat of His flesh and drink of His blood. He also turned water into wine at a dinner. Just study the Word for a while and think metaphorically.
John also ate raw honey. The Old Testament makes many references to Israel being in a land ‘flowing with milk and honey.’ As such, John must have had plenty of fructose and glucose to digest in between his locust feasts. Perhaps sometimes he combined locusts with honey for his main dish.
can imagine the vast number of recipes he must have had—honey roasted locusts.
Deborah the prophetess in the Old Testament is somehow related to honey. The name ‘Deborah’ in Hebrew simply means ‘bee’ and this word comes from the word ‘dabar’, or WORD, meaning ‘to speak or to declare, like God speaking’. One good characteristic of bees is that they just know how to work together to accomplish one common goal, that is ‘to make honey’. ‘Honey’ in this context speaks of ‘sweetness’, i. e. the result of their ‘working together’. Interestingly, this was also one of Deborah’s traits! Not only did she put things in order by her spoken words (‘dabar’), she also epitomised someone who worked in unity with her fellow brethren for one common purpose—to triumph over the enemy! When we study Judges 4 and 5 (see my notes), we cannot help but notice the faith Deborah had. She called for Barak to deploy troops at Mount Tabor to fight Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army. Because of her encouragement, Barak became the man God had called him to be. Though Deborah was originally the one with the faith, shockingly, it’s not her faith but Barak’s that’s noted in the Hall of Faith: ‘And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak. . . who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised. . .’ Heb. 11:32-33.
Now don’t get me wrong, I’m sure John ate something other than locusts and honey. The words that Jesus spoke later in His ministry were true. John certainly ‘did not come eating or drinking.’ Matt. 11:18. John’s diet was

simple. He was a voice, calling out in the wilderness, and what he ate and wore matched his mission.
Locusts is not something we eat for dinner, and if you live in the West, I'm guessing you don't either. But in the East, locusts don't have the same stigma attached to them. In fact, locusts are listed as one of the allowable foods in the Levitical Law and if you're still not so sure about eating locusts, don't worry, grasshoppers are also permitted: '. . . you may eat: the locust of any kind, the bald locust of any kind, the cricket of any kind, and the grasshopper of any kind.' Lev. 11:22. I lack any explanation why John the Baptist preferred the locust, as in the Bible they have a very negative connotation as the swarm of locusts devouring everything—likening them to a vast army in the Book of Joel.

Mark 1:10
And as soon as He was come out of the water, John saw the heavens opened and the Spirit like a dove descending and resting upon Him;
John the Baptist did not see the Spirit descending on Him, but a dove. The reason is we cannot discern the Spirit and when we do see it with our eyes, then it is in the likeness of an angel, the Lord Himself, and in this chapter it is symbolised in a dove. The Apostle Luke 3:22 is more clear, saying 'and the Holy Spirit came down in a bodily shape, like a dove on Him.' Because the Holy Spirit is just that—spirit—He is not visible to us. This occasion, however, was a real visible appearance, and was doubtless seen by the people. The dove is an emblem of purity and harmlessness (Matt. 10:16) and the form of the dove was assumed on this occasion to signify that the Spirit with which Jesus would be endowed would be one of purity and innocence.
Another symbol involving the dove comes from the account of the flood and Noah's ark in Genesis 6-8. When the earth had been covered with water for some time, Noah wanted to check to see if there was dry land anywhere, so he sent out a dove which came back with an olive branch in her beak. Gen. 8:11. Since that time, the olive branch has been a symbol of peace. Symbolically, the story of the dove tells us that God declared peace with mankind after the Flood purged the earth of its wickedness. The dove represented His Spirit bringing the good news of reconciliation with God. Of course, this was only in a temporal sense because true spiritual reconciliation with God only comes through Jesus Christ. But it is significant that the Holy Spirit was pictured as a dove at Jesus' baptism, thereby once again symbolising peace with God. The dove is a symbol of purity and did you know a dove has no gall bladder, so there's no guile—sounds lovely. Gall implies bitterness and death. We cannot see the spirit but the dove does portray its positive attributes. Then followed a voice from heaven saying, 'You are My beloved Son. '

The New Testament is packed with citations from the Old Testament. It is a citation of Isaiah 42.

Mark 1:11And there came a voice from heaven, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ’
With these opening words, we can easily fall into a trap. This verse is a quotation from two sources:
Psalm 2:7: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You,’
Isaiah 42:1: ‘Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One, in whom My soul delights!’
The words ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ gives us an introduction to the final revelation of Christ with His resurrection. From the beginning of His mission, there is an urgency to fulfil His final mission on earth, and His first encounter is a head-on collision with Satan in the wilderness.
When we study the Word of God, we need to be receptive to what the Spirit of God wants to teach us. It focuses foremost on Christ’s resurrection. In Ephesians 1, the Apostle Paul says He wishes that the spirit of wisdom and revelation will open our eyes to the hope of His calling. To know the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. We need to understand the meaning, the extent, the impact and the significance of Christ’s resurrection. We need to view our faith through the eyes of His resurrection. If we take the resurrection of Christ away, the entire house will fall apart. In Acts chapter 2, Peter stands up in Jerusalem to preach a sermon and his sermon commences with Joel 2, and from verse 22, he draws their attention to Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God performing many miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of them. They crucified Him. Peter accuses the public as unknowingly they crucified Jesus. But the story didn’t end there. Verse 24 says, ‘Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the birth pains of death.’ Very interesting word, the word birth pains. It’s used of that experience of pain that a mother endures prior to giving birth to a child. And anyone who knows that knows that it is the pain before the greatest bliss of life. And so the pain of death for Jesus was not the pain of doom, but it was the pain of anticipation. It was the pain of resurrection, birth and glory. And that’s why the writer of Hebrews said He endured the pain of the cross for the joy that was set before Him.
And then it continues in verse 24, ‘Because it was not possible that He should be held by it.’ Death couldn’t hold Him. God raised Him up. The pain He suffered was not the pain of anticipating death and doom as it is for so many who die without God. But it was the pain of anticipating joy and glory, and death could not restrain Him. Verse 25 says David speaketh concerning Him. When David spoke, it wasn’t just David, it was God. And when God said what He said, God had to raise Jesus to affirm His truthfulness. The character of God is at stake. You see, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is on trial. David speaketh concerning Him. Then follows a quote from Psalm 16, ‘I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover, my flesh also shall rest in hope because Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades. Neither wilt Thou

allow Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the way of life; Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance.' David spoke about the resurrection. Of whom did David speak? Whoever David was speaking about, it wasn't about himself, as he is in a grave. So it was not of himself of whom he spoke. David is prophesying about the Messiah. And God had sworn with an oath that out of the fruit of the loins of David would come a Messiah who would be raised up to sit on the throne. v. 30. David, seeing this beforehand, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in Hades, neither his flesh did see corruption. v. 31. I'll ask again, why did God raise Jesus from the dead? Why does it say 3 times in this passage? The second time is in verse 30, and the third in verse 32. Why does it say God raised up Jesus? Because God had promised a king, and God had affirmed that that king would rise out of the grave to sit on the eternal throne of his father David. And it was the Word of God that caused God to raise Christ from the dead. It is the breath of the new covenant in Christ.

In other words, God's trustworthiness was at stake. God's faithfulness. So if you take the resurrection out of Christianity, you have just stripped God of His faithfulness. Verse 32 continues to say this Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

That is why Jesus says in John 2, 'destroy this temple and in three days, I'll build it again.' He repeatedly predicted His own resurrection. And so the very truthfulness of Jesus Christ is at stake. If He did not rise from the dead, then He, like God, is a liar and cannot be trusted any more than God can. To see this in its truest sense, look at Colossians 1:16 that all things created in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers were created by Him. He is the supreme one as He is risen from the dead.

In Romans 1:4 says He proved to be the Son of God with power. How? 'By the resurrection from the dead.' It was in the resurrection that God declared Him to be His Son, His Deity, His Messiahship, all bound up in the resurrection. This is a marvellous truth as the Apostle Peter continues in Acts 2:36 saying: 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' It was not when He was born at Bethlehem. The word assuredly means without doubts, with perfect certainty, by the resurrection, He is declared to be the Son of God. He was not the Son when He was made lower than the angels or when He descended into the pits of hell. The word declare is marvellous. It's the word horidzo in the Greek, from which we get horizon. The horizon is the clear line that demarcates the earth from the sky; it is a clear line—no mistake. And Jesus was clearly marked out as distinct from all others in the universe by His resurrection from the dead. In fact, in Revelation 1:18 in the great vision of Jesus Christ, He sums up His own life in this way. 'I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and death.' The reason He controls hell, the reason He controls death, is because He conquered it with His resurrection.

It says in Philippians 2 that He died, taking upon Him the form of a servant and He suffered the pangs of hell. And then it says God highly exalted

Him, gave Him a Name above every name, that at the Name of Jesus, every knee should bow. And He became the supreme ruler of all. Matthew 28 says all authority is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. It is said after His resurrection. The supremacy, the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ came as a result of His resurrection. If there is no resurrection, then Christ is the loser; sin is the winner; death is the winner; hell is the winner; the grave is the winner. And He is not the sovereign over death. And He does not have the keys to the grave and to hell; Satan does.
So you see, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, His credibility is at stake. 'If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. You are yet in your sins.' 1 Cor. 15:17. There is no salvation, and even those who have fallen asleep will perish. If only in this life we have hope in Christ, we are all men most miserable. If He can't do anything in the life to come, it's all misery.
Seamen, in ancient times, used to like to have among their crew members a very courageous and strong swimmer because it was not uncommon for them to be approaching a shore. And because of the stormy seas, find it unable to be reached. And they would stay as far away from the crashing waves that they could and they would tie a rope around the waist of that strong swimmer. And he would dive into the sea and swim with all his might for the shore, hoping to reach the shore, take the end of the rope, tie it around a tree or a rock, that it might be anchored as a lifeline.
And then on that rope, clinging to it for life itself, the people would come from the ship to the shore.
Christ was such a seaman, such a pioneer, that He mastered the waters of sin and death and hell.
And if He drowned, then we would have drowned with Him.
I wish to return to Acts 2, and verse 33 says Christ is now exalted to the right hand of God. Note that it is accomplished with His resurrection from the dead. He is plucked from the deepest chambers of hell to be glorified at God's right hand. Make no mistake, He was not on God's right hand before His death or with His humiliated birth at Bethlehem. Since He is exalted to the right hand of God, He received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit He poured on us who believe. The early Christians had just seen the marvellous phenomenon of the coming of the Holy Spirit, and Peter said it is solely tied to His resurrection. The Apostle Paul says Rom. 8:11 that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells now in us; the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead, now lives in our mortal bodies. When God resurrected Christ from the gates of hell, He exalted Him far above any principality, power, might and dominion.
The complete Book of Hebrews hinges around the work Christ is doing for us today as our High Priest. Psalm 110 is the most referenced passage of the Old Testament in the New Testament. Verse 1 alone is referenced 18 times directly, and several times more indirectly. Few words in the Bible have stirred up more controversy than this Psalm. Hebrews 1:5 says for to which of the angels did He ever say, 'you are my son, today I have begotten you'? And again, 'I will be a Father to him and he shall be a son to me'?
Hebrews 1:5 is set in a context that specifies that Jesus was not 'begotten' by God until AFTER Christ had made purification for our sins. Also note

that ‘will be’ and ‘shall be’ are both future tense, meaning after Jesus had made purification for sins at Calvary, He would then be ‘begotten’ by His Father.
Hebrews 5:5: So too Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed and exalted by Him Who said to him, ‘You are My Son; TODAY I have BEGOTTEN You.’ There is no mistake, and don’t be side-tracked by the many theologians who love to complicate things. There was no Son of God prior to His crucifixion, and the theologians will love to complicate everything to substantiate their doctrine of the trinity. There is ONE God.
‘Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.’ Deut. 6:4. Jehovah our God is the only living and true God; He only is God, and cannot be divided.
Let us not desire to have any more. It would have been unimaginable if Christ did not resurrect from the dead, and I don’t even want to think of it. Then Satan would have triumphed. The heavens must have trembled when our Lord descended to the abyss to conquer it. There was a great crisis in heaven, but the only means to redeem a world of sin.
With Christ’s resurrection, the old has passed and everything became new.
‘Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.’ 2 Cor. 5:17.
Colossians 2:15 tells us what happened at the cross. At the cross, ‘He spoiled the principalities and powers.’ The word spoiled indicates there was something to be gained by overpowering the fallen ones. And He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Whoever these principalities and powers are, they were trying to triumph over Christ. They were trying to destroy Christ. They were trying to win the victory over Christ, so we know who they are. They are Satan and his demons, who desired Jesus to die on the cross, who wanted that He should never come out of the grave, who wanted that in the bearing of sin, He would be crushed beyond all possibility of resurrection.
And then Satan and His hosts would be able to terrorise the universe forever.
But in the cross, Jesus triumphed over them. How did He do that? Well, Hebrews 2 tells us basically. It says that He destroyed him that had the power of death, which is the devil. You see, the primary power that Satan and his demons have is the power of death, but Christ destroyed that. Christ devastated that. When He came out of the grave, He showed that He could conquer death. You see, the demons, along with Satan who is just a demon himself, wanted to crush the life of Christ out so He could never rise from the dead to be the sovereign over them. But they couldn’t do it. And even while they were having their celebrations in Him dying, His spirit came into their presence, announced His victory and His triumph. And when He came out of the grave, it solidified that and He ascended into heaven at the right hand of the Father and He now reigns over all angels, fallen or unfallen.
The Apostle Paul’s great desire was to know Him and the power of His resurrection. Phil. 3:10. We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is, when our vile bodies will be transformed to a glorious new body like unto

His body. John says, he that hath this hope in him, purifies himself. 1 John 3:3.
If we dare to eliminate the resurrection, then everything falls apart, yes everything. Then we are not right with God, and we don't have eternal life or any hope. Then Christ cannot be our High Priest in heaven, to intercede for us.
Now we need to study Isaiah 42:1 in greater detail. 'Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One, in whom My soul delights!' It is a cross-reference to Mark 1:11.
Who is the Servant in Isaiah?
The Jews often claim that the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 42 and 53 refers to the nation of Israel. In an attempt to justify their argument, they say that one needs to read from Isaiah chapters 41 through to 53-54 to see that the word 'servant' (which occurs 19 times) is expressed through phrases like 'But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen. . . . You are my servant…' 'For the sake of Jacob my servant,' etc. Thus they 'reason' that the suffering servant in chapter 53 is none other than the nation of Israel. Throughout the Old Testament, 'servant' doesn't always exclusively refer to Israel as a nation.
It occurs in the following instances.
When the Lord is speaking through His prophets about His servant—whether that servant be Israel as a nation or an individual.
'But now listen, Jacob, my servant, whom I have chosen.' Isa. 44:1. 'Go and tell my servant David, "This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?"' 2 Sam. 7:5. Even the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar is called God's servant in Jer. 25:9: 'I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,' declares the LORD.
When an individual is speaking to God like Daniel: 'Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant.' Dan. 9:17.
When the context is clearly understood to mean a household servant: 'Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son.' Gen. 30:10. Now the book of Isaiah is very interesting because it is the only book in fffffffffffffffffk the Old Testament where in certain verses God is speaking about His servant, but unlike the rest of the Old Testament, doesn't attach any name before or after the word servant—not Israel/Jacob or any individual's name but only says 'my servant'. This occurs only in the book of Isaiah, namely in chapters 42:1, 43:10, 49:6, 49:7, 52:13, 53:11. These verses cannot be referring to Israel as a nation because they pose a few problems. Firstly, as we have already seen, God always specifies the name Israel/Jacob if He means to refer to Israel as a nation as His servant and secondly there are key phrases in these verses showing they cannot refer to Israel solely as a nation.
'He will bring justice to the nations'. When has Israel as a nation brought justice to the nations? 42:1. 'You are my witnesses'—Why witnesses in the plural if referring to one nation? 43:10. 'To restore the tribes of Jacob' 49:6. When has Israel as a nation restored the tribes of Jacob? Only Judah and Benjamin survived.

‘To him who was despised and abhorred by the nation.’ (singular) Is the nation of Israel despising itself as a nation? 49:7. ‘My servant will act wisely, he will be lifted up’ 52:13. If Israel as a nation had acted wisely they wouldn’t have come under God’s judgment throughout history according to the Covenant promises of Deuteronomy 28, therefore historically, Israel was not lifted up. ‘He will justify many. ’—When has Israel as a nation justified many? 53:11.
We therefore conclude that the ‘My Servant’ passages in Isaiah are Messianic and are not referring to Israel as a nation but to an individual within the nation of Israel (who represents Israel) who will bring about Israel’s deliverance and restoration.
In light of what has been revealed here, the question then becomes ‘who is this servant?’ because as seen throughout the Old Testament, God always specifies Israel/Jacob when addressing the nation as His servant and specifies an individual’s name when wishing to address an individual as His servant.
‘My’ is the possessive form of ‘I’ meaning ‘of me’ or ‘belonging to me’. Could this be God’s mysterious way of saying or showing us that the ‘my’ in ‘my servant’ is ‘Me.’ It is God and not a nation or a person who will bring all the above to fulfilment?
Another reason why Isaiah 53 cannot refer to the nation of Israel is because if the nation of Israel had been righteous as a nation, it wouldn’t have suffered the Covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28 like exile and divine judgment. The Bible is very clear that Israel was guilty and suffered as a result of her own sins. But we see that the servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53 is not guilty and yet He is suffering terrible things at the hands of others.
Isaiah 53 also cannot refer to the righteous remnant within the nation of Israel because then it would have to mean that ‘by the sufferings of the righteous remnant of Israel we are healed.’ Isa. 53:5. It is the sufferings of the Messiah that bring healing to those who recognise what He has done and trust in God.
When we read the commentaries of Isaiah 53 and read that the suffering servant is Israel and not Jesus, I ask myself the following questions:
Has Israel ever poured his soul unto death?
Has Israel been numbered among the transgressors? Criminals.
Has Israel borne the sin of many and then been revived? v12. Has Israel been ‘cut off’ from the land of the living? v8. Clearly the servant is the Lord.
Why is the servant not addressed as the Son?
We need to study Galatians 4:1, ‘I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son

into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.
’Notice the first verse: the son (heir) is no different from a slave though he is lord (owner) of all. But he is being matured through teaching and management to become the heir. Children are slaves (obedient) to their parents until they are mature enough to receive the inheritance and that is at the time appointed of their father. The appointed inheritance time is up to the Heavenly Father and believers should never concern themselves with that time, but learn who they are through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor. 2:12.
The humiliated Jesus was a servant. There is a difference between a son and a servant. Both must learn to obey, but in a different manner and for different reasons. The Book of Hebrews 5:8 tells us that Jesus behaved more like a servant than a son. He did not try to become important. He learnt to be humble and to obey. Luke 2:51. He chose to describe Himself as a servant. Mark 10:45.
So Christ obeyed. We see that same word in Romans 5:19. There, Paul contrasts Adam and Christ. Adam did not obey God. Because of his wrong act, death has power over everyone. But Christ obeyed God completely. Because of His right act, people can receive life that never ends.
In the Bible, there is often a link between Christ’s death and the idea of a servant. For example, see Isaiah 53:11 and Philippians 2:5-8. His duty to obey as a servant mattered more to Christ than His own life did. He gave His whole life to obey God. And He accepted death to obey God. He did not use His authority to save Himself. People told Him to do that (Matt. 27:40) but He refused. So even in Jesus’ death, He was still obeying God the Father completely. He was a servant until the day appointed of the Father in which He inherited all things. That was with His resurrection from the dead, when He ascended to heaven. He proved to be the Son of God. He became the Heir (Son) of God’s throne as EVERYTHING became new. So easy to grasp if we are not influenced by the theologians.
The history of Isaac is simple. He was the promised seed but as a child he had to learn obedience as a servant. Once he was 12 years old, he was old and mature enough to be called the Son of Abraham, to inherit what is rightfully his.
Mark 1:14-15Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God 15 and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel. ’
John the Baptist is imprisoned and Luke clearly sympathises with John the Baptist when John had an encounter with Herod Antipas. Luke 3:19–20. He tells us that because of John’s reproof of Herod for all the evil things the tetrarch did, Herod abused his power and shut John in prison. It was a clear warning to the Lord Jesus to avoid Jerusalem. Thus He left Judaea to preach the kingdom of God in Galilee. We may question what is the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven? While some Christians believe that the Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven are different, it is clear that both phrases are the same.

The phrase ‘kingdom of God’ occurs 68 times in 10 different New Testament books; while the ‘kingdom of heaven’ occurs 32 times in the Gospel of Matthew.
If we compare the Gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke—you will find that Matthew’s ‘kingdom of heaven’ exactly parallels Mark’s and Luke’s ‘kingdom of God’. So there is no doubt in my mind that they are different terms describing the same thing. The ‘kingdom of heaven’ and ‘kingdom of God’ are synonymous. Today the kingdom of God is known to us but it is hidden from the eyes of the world. Matt. 13.
If there is a King, then there is a kingdom and our Lord is risen and all power is given to Him. The King is presently our High Priest and He is gracious, not exercising His privileges as a King; but after the rapture of the Church, things will change and the world will succumb to His kingdom. It is like David who became King at Jerusalem, after he suffered so many years of miseries. During the Millennium Christ will reign from Jerusalem, the navel of the earth. That is the reason why many times in the Bible Jerusalem and Zion are referred to symbolically as the heaven, or the navel of the earth. Jerusalem is set in the midst of the nations and the other countries of the world are placed around her. Eze. 5:5; 37:12. Certainly after the rapture of the Church, Jerusalem will be the centre of God’s attention and increasingly they have become the centre of the world’s concern no matter how hard people try to overlook it. The Temple Mount is the true ‘ground zero’ of the world.

Galilee
Our Lord left Judaea as He was not honoured there—choosing Galilee. Isaiah the prophet says in the midst of darkness a word of hope appeared. ‘The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.’ Isa. 9:2. He described the coming of the Messiah in terms of a light bursting forth on the darkness of Galilee. Isa. 9:1. St. Matthew used these words in chapter 4:15-16 as the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. The good news of the Kingdom of God from the lips of Messiah was reached first by these Assyrian provinces that were in the darkness. The prophet Isaiah used two important images to depict the magnitude of joy. The images are harvest and dividing up the booty after a successful plunder. Isa. 9:3. Harvest signifies the end of a long period of hunger. The days spent on the threshing floor are the most joyful in the whole year for the farmer and his family and indeed for the whole village. The same thought was echoed by the angel who said to the shepherds in Luke 2:10-11. For Jesus turns our sorrows into joy. Victory is procured over evil by the ‘Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace’. Isa. 9:6.
Israel will be set free; victory will come ‘as on the day of Midian.’ Isa. 9:4. This statement of the Prophet Isaiah refers to the time of Gideon who defeated the Midianites. Judges 7. It was a temporary defeat, but the victory of the coming Messiah will be final and everlasting who inaugurates His Kingdom. Isa. 9:5.
Isaiah’s hopes of light, joy, and victory are placed in the coming of the Messiah, who will establish and uphold ‘the throne of David and his kingdom.’ Isa. 9:7.

In the previous chapter God announces His judgement on Judah and He will not have

His domicile in Judaea but in Galilee amongst the ten tribes of Israel. Jesus ministering in Galilee is a forced fulfilment of this prophecy. Our Lord was baptised close to Galilee, but once John the Baptist was arrested, He chose Galilee. The death and imprisonment of John the Baptist is proof that the Jewish nation rejected the Lord. Very early in Jesus' ministry, He went to Galilee. Samaria was the capital of the ten tribes of Israel.

In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul said that there were over 500 witnesses to the resurrection, and the critics are quick to argue why we don't have any other record of them? Where are their letters or testimonies, arguing that Paul just made them up? I believe many of them went to the ten tribes of Israel wherever they were scattered, mostly on the seashores. The Bible has no history of this, but if you do visit Glastonbury today, they will quickly alert you.

Most people today know of the Celtic people, who were called the Gauls, and they inhabited what is now France, in Roman times. If you have ever read any of the 'Asterix' books, about a brave little Gaulish opponent of the Romans. The authors of 'Asterix' were remarkably clever and they knew a lot about Gaulish and Roman history, so their books should not be dismissed as mere 'comic' stories.

Have you ever wondered where the Gaul's came from? They were not the original inhabitants of France. The Gauls were a branch of the great Celtic race, which settled all over Europe and the British Isles. They were formidable foes for the Romans, and won many a battle. The Gauls were among the first people to receive the Gospel after the ascension of Christ. Some of the 70 witnesses went by ship to southern Gaul in Massilia, which is present-day Marseilles. They travelled around Provence, preaching the Word, and then further afield, following the Rhone Valley and thence to Brittany and other parts of Gaul. History tells us that Mary the mother of Jesus with Joseph of Arimathea went to Britain or Glastonbury. The Gauls established an eastern colony in Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey, which they called Galatia. In Jesus' time, and that of the Apostles, it was a thriving community and Paul addressed one of his epistles to the Galatians. It may also have addressed his epistle for the Gauls of Gallia, or modern-day France.

When the Lord commenced His ministry at Galilee, it was to portray that the early Church will be embraced mostly by the ten tribes of Israel and they were receptive to the Gospel. Samaria was the capital of the ten tribes of Israel.

I believe many of the 500 witnesses went to Britain and then to Massilia. The Celtic people are known as the sons of Isaac. Once we understand this, it is easy to picture our Lord going to Galilee leaving behind Judah that spelled lots of trouble.

In Matthew 2 we have the same history when Mary and Joseph had to flee Judah to go to Egypt and then they lived in Galilee, for fear of persecution. Now 30 years later the same history repeated itself. All the disciples Jesus

had were from Galilee on the seashore, and they portray the people of the sea, on the fringes of Western Europe. The Gospel was preached there and they did accept it.

Mark 1:16-20
16 Now as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. 17 And Jesus said unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. 18 And straightway they forsook their nets and followed Him. 19 And when He had gone a little further from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20 And straightway He called them; and leaving their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, they went after Him.
Many take this history too literally thinking our Lord strolled purposely along the seashore to pick His disciples randomly. No, there are many more issues. The mere mentioning of the Sea of Galilee may direct our thoughts to the 10 lost tribes of Israel who live by the sea. He said follow Me. They instantly left their nets and they had no career pep talk. The apostle Peter was not promised to be a Pope. The Lord picked the 2 fishers and they responded immediately. The word ‘immediately’ is found 42 times in the Gospel of Mark, 21 times in the Gospel of Matthew, 17 times in the Gospel of Luke and 7 times in John. The reason may be that in the Book of Mark our Lord is regarded as the obedient servant.
Jesus calls four men to be His first disciples—Simon and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John. No words are spoken by way of their response. But their actions speak volumes: as they left everything—nets, boats, and families—to follow Jesus.
The first disciples are not men of great theological education, with wide social influence. The work of Jesus is not in the hands of men and women whom the world considers great and famous, but in the hands of ordinary people like us who are willing to give God our life, our time, and our talents. The Apostle Peter was not chosen randomly as he was mentioned by one of John the Baptist’s disciples. In the Gospel of John, we are told that two disciples of John the Baptist (Andrew and an unnamed disciple) who heard John the Baptist announce Jesus as the ‘Lamb of God’ and then followed Jesus. Andrew then went to his brother Simon, saying, ‘We have found the Messiah’, and then brought Simon to Jesus. John 1:37-42.
Luke gives a clear history of the early life of the Apostle Peter. He mentioned that Simon’s mother-in-law was sick with a high fever. He healed her making the fever to leave her. She got up immediately and prepared a meal for them. Luke 4:38-39. That night when the sun was setting, everyone who had friends suffering from various diseases brought them to Him. He placed His hands on each of them and cured them. Demons came out of many people, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But Jesus ordered them not to speak.
When Judah was in darkness the sun or the light was shining at Galilee. He is the light of the world and He brightened the lives of the believers in Galilee. The people were healed and the demons left them in the darkness of night, when the world is swathed in darkness.

In the following chapter, Jesus met Peter when he caught the fish, saying He will make him fishers of men. The great argument is: was the Apostle Peter called to be an apostle when he was seen with John the Baptist or when he was fishing at Galilee?
Our Lord did not choose the Apostle Peter randomly as He knew him via John the Baptist, and after He healed his mother-in-law, when he hauled the great load of fish, making the nets tear.
The Apostle Peter's mother-in-law also portrays the ten tribes of Israel, as she epitomises the 'other' family of Judah.
Before the Lord chose the Apostle Peter He weighed him up. The Apostle Paul warned Timothy not to be too quick to appoint anyone as an elder. 1 Tim. 5:22. Our Lord did not choose His disciples randomly but He knew them.
It is common amongst the sceptics to raise the question concerning when Jesus called His first disciples. Allegedly, John's version of the calling (1:35-42) contradicts the other accounts. Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11. According to John, two disciples (one of which was Andrew) 1:40 were following John the Baptist. Then, after hearing Jesus, 'the Lamb of God,' they followed Him 'and remained with Him that day.' 1:39. Andrew also brought his brother Peter to meet Jesus at this time. 1:40-42. Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate, however, that Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John while they were out fishing on the Sea of Galilee. Are these contradictory accounts of Christ's calling of the apostles, or is there some rational explanation for the dissimilarities?
The sceptics say that John contradicts Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts of Jesus' calling of the apostles and it's unwarranted. John actually referred to a different circumstance altogether. John records Peter and Andrew's first meeting with the Christ. Matthew, Mark and Luke testify of a later meeting, when Jesus called them at the Sea of Galilee to become 'fishers of men.' The problem is not with the Bible writers, but with the Bible critics.
What happened was that the disciples were first introduced to Jesus through the ministry of John the Baptist. John said, 'Look, the Lamb of God,' and Peter and his friends went and spent some time with Jesus. Nowhere in John does it say that the disciples left everything at this point to follow Jesus. Sometime later these men were back in Galilee working as fishermen. Jesus walked up to them and said, 'Come follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' At this point they left their homes and work and followed Christ. There is absolutely nothing in the passages that causes any problem with this interpretation.

Mark 1:21-22
21 And they entered into Capernaum, and straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue and taught. 22 And they marvelled at His learning, for He taught them as one that had power with Him, and not as the scribes.
The Word of God is powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing asunder the soul and spirit. Heb. 4:12. It warrants an immediate response, and you cannot flout it thinking it. Our Lord is the Word of God and He

spoke with great authority, unlike the Rabbis who preached the Word not believing it. Our Lord raised the Scriptures, inviting a response from the Pharisees asking them—what does the Scripture say? Our Lord was a stranger to them and He was never taught in any of their colleges.

Mark 1:23-28
23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 24 saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God. 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent, and come out of him. 26 And the unclean spirit tore him and cried with a loud voice and came out of him. 27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For He commands the unclean spirits with power, and they obey Him. 28 And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.
The Jews demand a sign and the Greeks seek wisdom. It was the Jews' continuous demand throughout our Lord's ministry; and they were not content with any other sign short of a sign from heaven. Matt. 12:38; 16:1; John 2:18; 4:48. Our Lord refused them the honour, as the Jewish nation refused to digest the importance of the signs. Luke 17:20-21. The Greeks sought wisdom.
Now the big question of demonic activity. I just can't make sense of Jesus and His ministry without accepting that demons are real. To believe in non-physical beings having no bodies or brains in today's world seems erroneous. They challenge our scientific worldview that only the physical is real. Certainly, angels and demons, in one form or another, populate most of the world's religions. There are more recorded demonic activities during Jesus' life than in any other time in our Bible.
In the Gospels we only find 8 actual encounters.
They are with:

- Jesus' temptation. Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.
- The silencing of demons. Matt. 8:16; Mark 1:32-35; Luke 4:40-41.
- The man in the synagogue. Mark 1:23-27; Luke 4:31-37.
- The Gerasene demoniac. Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-37.
- The Canaanite woman's daughter. Matt. 15:22-28; Mark 7:24-30.
- The boy with seizures. Matt. 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43.
- The blind man. Matt. 9:32-33.
- The blind and mute man. Matt. 12:22-23; Luke 11:14.

Other possible examples include the seven demons expelled from Mary Magdalene. Luke 8:1-2. Jesus' rebuke of Satan's suggestion through Peter. Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:33. And His command to Judas after Satan had entered him. John 13:27. Additionally, we are told that the disciples Luke 10:17-20 and even someone they did not know Mark 9:38-40 saw demons submit to them, but we are not given any other details.
Throughout Jesus' life we see His work against the devastating work of demons in the lives of people. The vocabulary of demonic activities against human beings is rich and varied, though its aim is to harm the people they possess. They:

- Troubled and annoy the people. Luke 6:18.
- Robbed a young boy of his speech. Mark 9:17; 9:25.
- Rendered a man mute. Matt. 9:33; Luke 11:14.
- Froze the spine of an elderly woman. Luke 13:11; 13:16.
- Seized the Gerasene demoniac Luke 8:29 and a young boy Luke 9:39 in order to overwhelm them.

Throughout the Gospel accounts, the spirits influenced many human beings. Several terms are used to describe this. Jesus warned in a parable of the likelihood that multiple demons can live within a person. Matt. 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26.

The New Testament describes physical, social, and spiritual symptoms of demonic control, though no exhaustive list is given. The physical symptoms include muteness (Matt. 9:32-33; Mark 9:17; Luke 11:14), blindness (Matt. 12:22), self-inflicted wounds (Mark 5:5; 9:22), crying (Mark 5:4) or screaming (Mark 1:26; 5:7; 9:26), convulsions (Mark 1:26), seizures (Matt. 17:15), falling to the ground, rolling around, foaming at the mouth, grinding of the teeth, and rigidity (Mark 9:18; 9:20), inhuman strength (Mark 5:3-4), and staying active day and night (Mark 5:5).

The social symptoms include dwelling in unclean places (Mark 5:3; Luke 8:27) and going around naked (Luke 8:27). The spiritual symptoms include supernatural abilities such as recognition of the person of Christ and reaction against Him (Mark 1:23-24; 5:7; Luke 4:40-41) and the ability to tell the future (divination). Acts 16:16. None of these symptoms by itself should be seen as proof of demonisation. Rather, they are examples of the types of manifestations that come with demonic infestation.

Jesus came to set Satan’s captives free (Matt. 12:22-29; Luke 4:18-21) and in all of His dealing with the demonised people He proved to be compassionate, and He exercised great authority over the spirits. He commanded the spirit in the Gerasene demoniac to come out (Luke 8:29) and ordered the demon out of the man in the synagogue (Mark 1:27) and the young boy (Mark 9:25). He did not have to be physically present to secure their release, seen in the healing of the Canaanite woman’s cruelly demonised daughter from a distance (Matt. 15:22-28). The people were amazed that He simply commanded the demons and they obeyed (Luke 4:36) as previously they were used to seeing elaborate exorcism rituals that were not always successful. The demons in the Gerasene demoniac needed Jesus’ permission to enter the pigs (Mark 5:13; Luke 8:32) and He denied permission for the demons to speak (Mark 1:34; Luke 4:41). He rebuked the demon in the young boy (Matt. 17:18; Mark 9:25; Luke 9:42) and the man in the synagogue (Mark 1:25; Luke 4:35).

Spirits are mentioned 5 times in the Book of Acts. The people who were tormented by the evil spirits were brought before the apostles in Jerusalem and they were healed (Acts 5:15-16). Philip, not an apostle, exercised Christ’s authority over demons in Samaria (8:6-7). Paul released a slave girl who had a fortune-telling spirit by simply commanding the spirit to leave (16:16-18). God performed extraordinary miracles through Paul in Ephesus, including the expulsion of demons (19:11-12). The final

instance was between Jewish exorcists and a demoniac in which the exorcists were soundly beaten (19:13-17). When the church heard what happened, those who had not fully come out of their magical practices repented and publicly burned their expensive scrolls (19:17-20). The term ‘exorcism’ is not used of Jesus’ ministry. An exorcism implies a particular ritual, and Jesus, as well as the early church, relied on authority rather than ritual. It is not surprising, then, that nowhere in the New Testament is a Christian ritual for exorcism seen.

The demons pretend to be friendly spirits to deceive people (2 Cor. 11:15) to blind the minds of the believers (2 Cor. 4:3-4). They lead the people away from the truth (2 Tim. 3:13; 1 John 2:26; 3:7). They also lead people astray through the pursuit of pleasure or sensual gratification (Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:3). The appropriate means to deprive the demons of their power is to walk in the light (1 John 1:5-7), to strip the ‘old me’ and to put on Christ or the new (Eph. 4:22-29), being part of Christ (Col. 1:13) to be part of a totally new creation, knowing Satan has no part of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). We need to grow into the full measure of the stature of Christ, to be like Him (Eph. 4:14-16). No ritual will do.

Believers are not immune from demonic attack. Demons seek to influence Christians through false doctrines and teachings (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 4:1-4) as well as false miracles and wonders (2 Thess. 2:7-11; Rev. 16:14). Even though Christians cannot be owned or have their eternal destiny controlled by a demon, this does not necessarily mean they cannot be demonised or temporarily controlled by demons or have demons temporarily indwelling them.

The evidence pointing against demonisation of the believer includes Jesus’ defeat of Satan on the cross (John 12:31; Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14-15), God’s presence in us (2 Cor. 6:16) to protect each believer (1 John 5:18) and our status as being seated with Christ in heaven (Eph. 2:6). Evidence in favour of the demonisation of believers includes the statements of our need to know Satan’s schemes (2 Cor. 2:11) so that he will not gain a foothold on us (Eph. 4:26-27), the reality of demonic attack against believers (2 Cor. 11:3; 12:7; Eph. 6:10-12) and the commands to resist him (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9). No one should doubt that Satan and his demons are able to influence Christians. We solely trust Christ’s finished work for us on the cross. Because the One who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4) and we can withstand the demonic schemes. Our weapons in this ongoing struggle include our great authority, as we are seated with Christ at the right hand of God, far above every power (Eph. 1:15–2:6). We can trust our spiritual armour (Eph. 6:18).

Satan is the god of this world and he warps our bodies and minds, and moreover he shapes the politics of the day, and strangely no one notices it. In secret Christ is forming the Church today and similarly Satan also works on the quiet. Once Satan is humiliated to earth, then his secret plans will be known as the great Babylon.

When our Lord expelled the demons, it is a mere sign and nothing more. They don’t differ from all the other miracles He performed. All the miracles

and signs Jesus did like freeing the people from the demons have the same connotation.
It says Jesus did many signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written (Gospel of John) that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. John 20:30-31.
The word miracle and mirage sound very similar. A mirage is an optical illusion when hot air distorts or inverts reflected distant objects. You notice it but your mind tries to tell you it doesn't exist. It is a misconception. When the Jewish leaders saw the signs, they walked away thinking their minds were tricked. Isaiah prophesied about the unbelief experienced by the Jewish nation: 'Go, and tell this people, you hear indeed, but don't understand; and you see indeed, but don't perceive.' Isa. 6:9. The people who lived in a land of deep darkness, a light did shine. Isa. 9:2. The ten lost tribes of Israel are known as the Celtic people, and they had deep roots with the occultism. Halloween is traced to them. Halloween began over 2,000 years ago among the Celts and their pagan priests were called the Druids. The Druids are, without question, history's king of the occult. Witchcraft, Satanism, paganism and virtually all facets of the occult acquire instruction from the Druids. Some date Halloween to 300 years before Jesus was born; and then they lived in Western Europe, like the British Isles and Scandinavia. Imagine all the evil practices Jesus confronted at Samaria the capital of the ten lost tribes of Israel. He confronted their practices head-on. If we dare to meddle with the occult, then it's an open invitation for the lowest of beings.
As Christianity spread through the Western world, it slammed the brakes on the Celtic rituals and even today the Christians are blamed for harming the Celtic practices.
The Lord Jesus exorcised the demons at Galilee, and it is a mere sign to the times the people can expect, once the early Apostles will spread the Gospel to the North West corners of Europe, ending their evil practices. Exorcism was not known or unheard of in the West, but lately it is. Satan and his demons are priming the world for his arrival.
To the ancient Celtic peoples, pigs were considered very magical. Galilee and Judah opposed each other as the Jews were very different, abhorring the pigs. They were strictly forbidden. At Galilee a demon-possessed man made his home in the tombs, and nobody was able to bind him, not even with a chain. Sounds like Obelix and Asterix! When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran up and knelt before Him and shouted at the top of his voice for help. To make a short story short, the unclean spirits left the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the bluff into the sea, about 2000 of them, to drown in the sea. He went away and started spreading the news in the Decapolis about what Jesus had done for him, and everyone marvelled.
The demon used the vocal cords of the demon-possessed; saying: 'What do you want with me Jesus, You Son of the Most High God?' The demons knew who the Lord Jesus was and He quietened them. He did not allow them to spread the Good News, as Satan will seek an opportunity to exalt himself above Christ. They were silenced abruptly.

Mark 1:29-39
29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's mother-in-law lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her. 31 And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. 32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. 33 And all the city was gathered together at the door. 34 And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him. 35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after Him. 37 And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee. 38 And He said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39 And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.
When Jesus left the synagogue, He was accompanied by James and John, and He went straight to Simon Peter's mother-in-law, as she was suffering from a high fever. He brought her fever under control and it left her. At once she got up and began to see to their needs.
Then, as the sun was setting, all those who had friends suffering from every kind of disease were brought to Jesus and He laid His hands on each one of them separately and healed them. Evil spirits came out of many of these people, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But He spoke sharply to them and would not allow them to say any more, for they knew perfectly well that He was Christ. The Lord and His disciples are the Church.
This depicts the early history of the Church when the ten tribes of Israel were heavily snared with the demons. Since Christ was resurrected from the dead, the early apostles were welcomed by the ten tribes of Israel and especially Great Britain, who welcomed the believers and they were not persecuted. They rid the country from Satan's stronghold on the occult. The welcome surprise was from the other family of Israel and the Jewish nation were left out of the equation.
It is like Jacob who had to flee Israel and he was blessed by the 'other family' from father Abraham. He had a letter from Isaac confirming he was the firstborn, but nothing more substantial, and he feared for his life. Peter's mother-in-law felt ill and she found domicile in her house, comforted as Jacob in the house of Laban. She was surely blessed and likely the people at Galilee. The world outside was swamped in darkness, but the light was in her house, and a blessing for all the people who visited her.
I believe the disciples (James and John) of the Lord picture the Church, and the mother-in-law of Peter, the lost tribes of Israel. Clearly to the lost tribes of Israel or the people walking in darkness have seen a great light (Isa. 9:2) and Judah was left in darkness (Isa. 8). The house is the Church of Christ today.

The people who gathered at the door are all the other nations of the world who partake in the blessings of Israel.
Satan or the demons were not allowed to speak. God's mysteries were in the making and they needed to wait; our Lord lived another 3 years on earth, before He was resurrected as Christ. Satan wanted to make Him one of his masters.
While it was dark (v. 35) before the sun rose, our Lord woke up. The Young's Literal Translation translates it correctly as 'and very early, it being yet night, having risen, He went forth, and went away to a desert place, and was there praying.
'It happened before sunrise and the Lord did rise to pray. They looked for Him, and once they found Him, they said we were all looking for You. Our Lord went to a quiet place and to pray is worshipping God—it was His inventiveness to preach the Word of God to the lost people. We find a similar thought in Ephesians 1:5 when the Apostle Paul says He predestined us to the adoption as His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will. Our Lord went out to seek and to save our dark world.

Mark 1:40-45
40 And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. 41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42 And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was clean. 43 And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44 and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter.
The Healing of the Leprous ManThe healing of this leprous man has no practical worth to any of us, but soon we will discover it has a great spiritual connotation. It speaks to each of us. Many people were healed by our Lord, and some say there were 153 occasions, but the irony is they all became ill again before they died. The leprous man was blessed, but he died again, so practically speaking we have no message. Even the 3 people our Lord did resurrect from the dead died a second death, to again bear the pain of death. Any miracle our Lord performed like the healing of the leprous man is a sign of something far greater. To us the words become alive, once we realise what Christ did for us. The world will study this passage and merely notice the practical aspects, but we with our eyes of faith do experience things differently—we have a three-dimensional view.
In God's eyes we are like a leprous person and we too need to be healed, and the only means is to be freed from the old man. No medicine will help. Leprosy is like sin; it decays our bodies before we die. We notice our

aching bones and wrinkled face, but God notices our ‘inside’ and it’s comparable to leprosy. Our bodies decay before we die.
Our Lord said flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God, and we need a complete change.
That is the reason why we need to lay down the old, to embrace the new and eternal.
The only means to be freed from our body of sin and death is to die, and we did with Christ. He died for the sins of the world and with His resurrection, we became part of a total new creation. Today we perceive things with our eyes of faith. We can look at ourselves as part of the old, and we will notice the leprosy eating our bodies. We are called by God to see ourselves as totally part of a new creation, knowing the old is gone and crucified, and NOW everything became new. 2 Cor. 5:17. We are not burdened by whatever our load may be. Once we die, it does not matter if we were either rich or poor. We have a fresh start and the new life inside of us must develop. The Apostle Paul says several times that our citizenship is in heaven even though our bodies decay. I will never die, as I died once with my Lord on the cross, and I will never set foot in the abyss. We are formed from the earth and we can only sin, but what is inside our bodies is a million times more precious than our decaying bodies. We are like a vase. The vase is made from clay, but inside our vases have something so precious, it will never decay for all eternity. If we don’t have Christ, then the vase is empty and it sounds ‘hollow’. We know death reigns (Rom. 5:17) and the scars of sin are visible, but we have a perfect High Priest in heaven who cleanses us daily. At this very second God sees us as having no sin, and our skin is restored, looking like the skin of a young boy.
The Old Testament history has many examples of people who had leprosy. Naaman the commander-in-chief of the army of Syria was stricken with leprosy, and he went to Elisha. Eventually he followed the instructions of the ‘young man’ and he was cured. It said when he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, his flesh was restored, and his skin looked as if he was a young boy. 2 Kings 5:14.
Miriam (the sister of Moses and Aaron) contested Moses when He married an Ethiopian woman. Then Miriam developed leprosy for 7 days. She pictures natural Israel.
On one occasion, Moses’ hand became leprous, when he placed his hand on his body. Once he withdrew his hand, it became normal. If we tend to look on the inside we will soon discover the decay within our bodies. Naaman the commander-in-chief was healed from his leprosy, once he bathed in the River Jordan.
The history of Naaman grips me, partly because he was cleansed at the river Jordan. In Hebrew the word Jordan is translated as ‘yarad’ meaning death. The river flows from the north to the south, and that is where death reigns. When we cross the River Jordan, we are guaranteed new life, like the Israelites who entered the land of Canaan, once they crossed the River Jordan with Joshua. It’s like leaving the old to embrace the new.
The leprous man in the Book of Mark looked at Jesus, acknowledging the power of Jesus, knowing he could heal him.

He said: ‘You can heal me’ acknowledging the power of the Lord Jesus. Our Lord was filled with compassion and He stretched out His hand and touched him. He identified Himself with the leprous man and typologically our Lord too became leprous. He stretched out His hand of grace—to portray our 5th dispensation of grace. In the Old Testament no one was allowed to touch a leprous person, and once they did—they too were defiled.

The leprosy left the man totally and the Lord cleansed him totally, not sparing his organs. Similarly we were ‘touched’ by our Lord, and He cleansed us from every sin.

Once our Lord did descend down to the River Jordan to be baptised, and we too need to follow Him. We were all submerged like Naaman in the River Jordan, but once he/we left the waters, he/we are cleansed. It happened when we rose with Christ from the waters of death (yarad) leaving behind our leprous body. It all happened with His resurrection from the dead.

Jesus did descend into the waters of sin and death, but He rose triumphantly. We followed Him in death, to never taste it again.

We tend to think money can solve all the world’s problems and we can be forgiven once we paid our fine. The price might be paid, but it does not guarantee us we will never sin again. Once we are in the habit of driving through the ‘red traffic lights’, we will be fined, and once we paid the fine, it does not necessarily change our ‘bad habits’. No, we need to be reborn or be changed completely. Similarly when we accepted Christ, we are part of the new creation and everything became new for us. The Apostle Paul wrote that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. 2 Cor. 5:17. If we are cleansed, we are totally cleaned, and having our Lord as our High Priest in heaven, He will ensure that our feet are washed daily. It is His duty and He will protect us when we walk in a polluted world. John 13:1-17. The man was totally healed from his leprosy and likewise God notices no fault in us. His message to us is we are complete in Christ. Col. 2:10. He who has the Son has life; and if we refuse the Son, we don’t have life. John 3:18. Our good works will never satisfy God’s anger, as we need to change or be born again. The penalty of our sins is dealt with, and moreover we are a total new creation in Christ. Our DNA is engineered in heaven.

Via the healing of the leprous man a great multitude of people followed Him. Via the ‘One’ we have the great multitude or the calling of the Church. We are the great multitude of people and the leprous man is the Lord Jesus who took our sins on His own body.

He who knew no sin is made sin for us. 2 Cor. 5:21. We are made righteous through Him and via His death the old man is punished and cleansed. Our Lord was resurrected as Naaman from the waters totally spotless and part of the new creation. He led the way ahead of us, and now is seated on God’s right hand in heaven. We are totally part of that kingdom, since we are totally cleansed.

The Apostle Paul says we are now part of heaven, yes heavenly citizens and we will never see death. Our spirit is in heaven and if we are not there —then we are outside the camp bearing His reproach.

So let us go forth to Him outside the camp bearing His reproach. Heb. 13:13.

In Old Testament times, outside the camp was where everything unclean went. The Israelites were commanded to burn the remains of the sacrificial bulls, including their dung, outside the camp as sin offerings. Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:12, 21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27. The red heifer was to be slaughtered and burned outside the camp, and the priest was unclean and could not come back into the camp until he had bathed; the ashes were to be laid outside the camp for a water of impurity. Num. 19:3-10. (Read my notes on the Levitical offerings.) The bodies of Nadab and Abihu were carried outside the camp after they were consumed by the Lord. Lev. 10:4-5.

The leper was to be pronounced unclean by the priest, to tear his garments, to uncover his head, to cover his upper lip, to call out, 'Unclean! Unclean!', and to live alone outside the camp. Lev. 13:46; 14:3. When Miriam was made leprous, she was shut outside the camp. Num. 12:10-15. Outside the camp was a place of defilement, uncleanness, impurity, corruption, dirtiness, filthiness, pollution, contamination, condemnation, punishment, rejection, castigation, and reproach. It is where disease, dung, and death were. Anyone who was banished to the outside of the camp was excluded, isolated, and ostracised.

Is that a sanctuary for the King of Glory? Is this anywhere for the Sovereign of the Universe to be? Is this anywhere for the undefiled, sinless, pure Lamb of God to be? Would not such a holy man, the very God-Man, be squarely inside the camp, welcomed, praised and honoured? Yet the passage above in Hebrews 13 says that Jesus Christ was and is outside the camp. It says that Jesus Christ suffered shame and reproach. How can this be? Does not the Old Testament demand that only those who are unclean, leprous, defiled, blasphemers, worthy of death, be outside the camp?

Hebrews 13:12 says that Jesus Christ suffered outside the gate. He was tortured and executed by crucifixion in the place where all the criminals who had committed capital offences were tortured and executed—not inside the camp, but outside the camp. They wouldn't dare crucify someone inside the confines of the city. Jesus Christ was taken outside the camp, to a place called Golgotha, meaning 'a place of the skull'—a place of death. Criminals were put to death here. These scum-of-the-earth were tortured and killed there.

Why was Jesus Christ among those who suffered and died outside the camp? Jesus Christ is legally charged with our sins and considered a leper. Just as the sacrificial bull was burned outside the camp as a sin offering, our Lord suffered and died outside the camp as a sin offering for His people. He became unclean, defiled, worthy of death—and the reason is He placed our sin on Himself. As such, He needed to be punished outside the camp, where the unclean and defiled people go. Our sins were imputed to Jesus as He made the One who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Cor. 5:21.

With these precious truths in mind, we as God's people too need to go forth to Him outside the camp bearing His reproach. What does this

mean? Does this mean that we, too, are to have sins imputed to us and to bear the other people's sin outside the camp? Of course not. It would be blasphemous to say that God commands us to do this. The Jewish nation and the world considered Christ Jesus as unclean, defiled and worthy of death. He proved He was not of the world, and the world hated Him for it. If the world hates us, then we know that it hated Him. John 17. We suffer with Christ because we are one with Him in telling the world that they are lost and their deeds are evil! This is why we are hated on account of the name of Christ. We bear the same reproach Christ bore, because we tell the self-righteous people the same thing Christ told them.
Don't be fooled as we are not acknowledged by the world and likewise our Lord in heaven. Our refuge is in heaven with Christ.
The Great Day of Atonement does teach us many things. It was the only day when the high priest was allowed to enter the inner sanctuary. Similarly Christ entered the inner sanctuary (heaven) for us, and He is now at the right hand of God in heaven, where He cleanses us. Ps. 110:1-2. The Great Day of Atonement is drawn out for us, having freedom to enter the inner sanctuary where Christ is seated. On that day a bull, ram and two goats were offered. What draws my attention are the two goats who were offered as a sin offering.
The first goat is for Jehovah, and the other for Azazel. 'And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD (Jehovah), and the other lot for the scapegoat (Azazel).' Lev. 16:8. The first goat is Jehovah or Jesus, who dwelt amongst us, and He did become like one of us.
The second goat is called Azazel (meaning a strong goat), and he was freed to live in the desert.
When the first goat is offered, its blood was sprinkled all the way from the altar to the inner sanctuary that represents heaven. The trace of blood on the ground opened the way for us to the inner sanctuary. The blood or its life is on the mercy seat, behind the second veil. The seven times that the blood is sprinkled portrays God's perfect work to procure our reconciliation. That is the living way that Christ did accomplish on our behalf! Heb. 10:20. The blood that was shed lives today, and now Christ is the true and living way. John 14:6.
The nation had to wait patiently for the high priest to reappear after leaving the sanctuary. Once they saw him, they knew their sins were atoned for. Today Christ is seated for us in the inner sanctuary and for us it is still the Great Day of Atonement, doing intercession for us. We can follow Him along the living way, all the way to heaven. To ignore this 'living way' or the blood of the new covenant is like reverting back to the old. Indisputably, Christ reconciles us to God, and we are totally dependent on Christ's work for us in the inner sanctuary! v. 17. Today Christ's work is limited to the Church in the inner sanctuary, but when He returns He will do atonement for the complete world, as portrayed by the four horns on the altar of the burnt offering. Christ's atonement will then redeem the entire world.
Following the offering of the first goat, the second goat is brought to Aaron, and then he had to place his hands on his head, to symbolically transfer all the people's unrighteousness on his head. Since the first goat

(Christ) is alive today, the second goat (the Church) will also be alive. We (the second goat) owe our lives to the first goat (Christ). The second goat is not released in the desert to die, but rather to live as we too live in the desert. We have no prerogatives in our world as we exchanged the old for the new. We live in the desert. As previously mentioned Paul pictures our position in our world as people who are placed outside the camp bearing His reproach. We sense this world is not ours, for we have received a new life in exchange for the old.

We, as part of Christ's body, can be pictured as both the 1st and the 2nd goat. We are the first goat since we died, but yet we do live as the 2nd goat in the desert. Our place is to be seated with Christ in heaven. Eph. 2:5. The life of the 1st goat entered the inner sanctuary. The 2nd goat reflects our life on earth. Christ is the High Priest and He steered the goat into the desert. Many times Paul reiterated this, and similarly Israel's history in the desert. We as the goat freed in the desert live owing to the manna (bread) that feeds us in the desert.

The goat is sent into the desert with the aim to live, but outside the gates of Jerusalem or the commune.

With the offering of Leviticus 14, we have a very similar backdrop. We need to understand the Great Day of Atonement before we can grasp the meaning of the other offerings.

Leviticus 13 and 14 are long chapters dealing with leprosy. Our main concern is how a leprous person is cleansed. If a leprous person happened to be cured of this awful disease in Old Testament times, then he had to see a priest. The person had to meet the priest outside the camp.

We mentioned the great impact of being outside the camp.

This offering is strongly tied to the offering and the ashes of the red heifer, as the cedar, the hyssop and the scarlet are again mentioned in both. They are only mentioned with the 2 offerings the leprous man had to prepare. The priest had to take a clay pot, and he had to fill it with the living water. v. 5.

The water is the Word of God, and it causes any person to either die or live. The laws of Moses (Word of God) did judge us, and it made us die. New life emanates from the living water, the same water that used to judge us. A prime example is the flood of Noah; it either judged the world or saved the people in the ark.

They had to slaughter the first bird above the clay pot, mixing the water and the blood. They took the other live bird, and that bird was baptised (not sprinkled) in the crucible with the living water and blood. Similarly, he had to take the cedar, the hyssop and the scarlet and in corresponding manner, he had to baptise or smear them into the crucible. The second bird was freed, and it flew back to 'heaven'. It was cleansed by the slain bird.

Similarly, one of the two scapegoats was freed on the Great Day of Atonement, as it was redeemed by the blood of the slain goat. It vividly pictures Christ's death and resurrection. Our Lord Jesus did come to earth, and He was caught as the bird flying in the heavens. The bird who was caught portrays Christ's birth at Bethlehem. He was snatched from heaven, and He died a humble death. As the first bird portrays His death,

the other freed bird pictures His resurrection from the dead. Indeed Christ went back to heaven to intercede for us.
His life on the cross was not the end of His life, as He was well aware of a better way, through the death and resurrection – to a new and better covenant. For a clear reason, He raised Lazarus from the dead as it pictured His eventual resurrection. He never intended to end His life without the sight of His resurrection. He was determined: Why did they pierce His side? The soldiers knew that our Lord was dead, and breaking any bone was futile. When the soldiers did poke his side with a sword, they were shocked. Immediately water and blood flowed from his side – something they never thought possible. The next verse says: 'And he that saw it bare record and his record is true,' The blood and water that flowed from His side had an immediate effect from that moment. Its cleansing power was not on hold until the last day of Judgement. When this happened, many people believed in the power of the water and the blood; picturing something special. The witnesses who saw this were silent, but they did bear record. This is a miracle, and equally the renting of the veil in the sanctuary of the temple. It says that the people did believe when they saw the water and blood. The 'true record' is not His death, as that was evident. The greater implication is the life that emanated from the Lord's side – the life that caused His resurrection. John again mentions the water and blood in His Epistles. 'This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that testify:' 1 John 5:6, 7 All the new manuscripts omit the following words of verse 7 saying: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. Without a doubt, they were written down wrongly as many theologians tried to substantiate the theory of trinity with the verse. Some manuscripts tend to keep them. It is not the 'trinity', but rather the water, blood and the spirit that do testify of God's great work within us. The true Life is the water (Word of God), the blood (the life of Christ) and His Spirit. Once Israel does see Christ on the day of the Lord, then they will recognise the scar on His side. I am certain they will relate that to His life-giving power. We need the water or the saliva in our mouths when we speak. The water is trapped in our mandible or jaw. Once Samson used the jawbone of a donkey, and he killed many Philistines. Indirectly the jawbone portrays the Word of God; the Word that judged the Philistines. A person may be dead or a skeleton, but His jaw will validate the words he spoke. Miriam the sister of Aaron and Moses was the first recorded person in the Bible having leprosy. In Greek her name will be translated as Mary. We can compare her to the seven Mary's in the Gospels. Miriam and Aaron did argue with Moses when he married an Ethiopian woman. To end the dispute, God called them to the tabernacle. He descended on a pillar of cloud and He told them that clearly He speaks to Moses face to face, and not in riddles. Both Miriam and Aaron never had such a close relationship with God. Moses epitomises the law. When the Scriptures refer to the laws, it says many times Moses, to avoid mentioning the 'law.' The law is concrete – meaning it's definite. Solid decisions had to be made. It gives an unbending decree. The cemented buildings are equally hard and

unyielding as the laws of Moses. Now we can approach the history from a different angle. As Moses pictured the unyielding nature of the law, both Aaron and Miriam wanted to opt out of it. They wanted to be delivered from its authority. Similarly we can study the 10 lost tribes of Israel, and they too had a similar temperament as they refused to obey the laws of Moses. Since the time of King Solomon, the 10 lost tribes never had a righteous king. We are similar since we as the accused people do not adhere to the law, as we are made free in Christ. In the end, the Lord was infuriated with Miriam and not Aaron; He did procure a judgement against her. We will discover that the ‘seven day’ period, when Miriam became leprous; corresponds to our dispensation of grace. Aaron as the high priest was not punished, as he pictures the work Christ is doing for us right now. The Hebrew word Aaron means; ‘light bringer,’ being Christ or the Word of God. In contrast, Miriam pictures the Church outside the camp. Aaron was not punished, but Miriam was covered with leprosy, and she had to go without the camp. I hope you can picture this. Miriam outside the camp is likened to us. Now we are regarded as lepers, dead to the world as Miriam. Mary epitomises the Church or the 10 lost tribes of Israel. In the history of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, they always wanted to be freed from the laws of Moses. King Solomon, and Rehoboam his son opted for the law, making Israel’s load more burdensome, but luckily the 10 lost tribes opted for freedom and they too did not do anything good in His eyes. Figuratively speaking the ten tribes of Israel are likened to Miriam who was leprous. She was forced to live outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not journey until she was cleared from leprosy. Numbers 12:15 Israel needs to wait until the rapture the Church is complete. Then God will concern Himself with the remaining Israelites at Paran, Selah or Petra. The ten tribes are leprous, yet they are the main bulk of the Church. In Luke 17, when our Lord stayed in Samaria and Galilee, before going to Jerusalem, He met 10 leprous people. Figuratively speaking he sojourned at the capital of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, before going to Jerusalem or the Jewish nation. In this chapter, the 10 leprous people Luke 17:12 embodies the 10 lost tribes of Israel. It says the 10 leprous people stood afar off. Those who stood afar off, were the 10 lost tribes who went to the far ends of the earth as New Zealand. Now the Church (10 lost tribes) are blessed, but natural Israelites will only be blessed in future on the day of the Lord, when Christ returns to Jerusalem. When the leprous people were healed, the Lord told them to go to the priest to be cleansed. They had to take the two birds, as it pictures Christ death and resurrection. When one of the 10 noticed that he was healed, he returned, praising God in a loud voice. The ‘one’ from the 10 people pictures the Church, who has its roots in the 10 lost tribes of Israel. ‘He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan.’ Luke 17:16 Here the emphasis is on the Samaritan. They are the clue of the story. The other nine lepers went their own way not believing Christ. The climax of God’s work is confined to our dispensation. Vividly this is portrayed with the believing leprous Samaritan. We all are familiar with the story of the Good Samaritan. Luke 10 It is easy to propose that the Good Samaritan is Christ who helped the wounded man. Two silver coins were given to the innkeeper, and this

portrays the 2000 years of our dispensation, and our Lord is the keeper at the inn. (Church) The Levite and the Pharisees were inept to help the wounded as they epitomise the law. Many disrespect them, but I am sure they had no means to help the wounded man. They couldn't help him or do anything good. Christ was on His way to Jerusalem, and He did help them. The Levite and the Pharisees went the opposite or the wrong way down to Jericho. The Jews loathed the Samaritans, and once our Lord was branded as being one of them. 'The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"' John 8:48 Our Lord did rebuke them in telling them that He was not possessed by a demon. For some reason many Churches miss the detail. Our Lord never argued that He was not a Samaritan. He is the Samaritan and He feeds us at the inn. Today the Jewish nation will never be known as the Good Samaritans. In this chapter, He spoke harsh words to them: You belong to your father, the devil. John 8:44 We are redeemed from the stranglehold of the law that yoked us. We do not fight the law, but we endorse its truths. Once we are dead, we are freed from the law. This is indeed true of any person on earth today, as we all died with our Lord's death, and the law has no grip on us. The punishment is paid, and we are justified in His death. Romans 6:1 If this is not enough, it also mentions the 5th toe, finger and earlobe. Why? The blood of the second bull was put on to the right ear lobe, the right thumb and the right big toe of the priest who was dedicated. This ritual also happened with the leprous person who was cleansed by the priest. Leviticus 14:14, 17 We wrongly associate the blood with death; however, in this instance the blood suggests the true Life that is endowed to the priest. In other words, the offerings reflect Christ, and the blood reflects the life of the resurrected Christ that is forwarded to the priests. 'We have also been sprinkled with blood. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.' 1 Peter 1:2 Through the sprinkling of His blood we will share in His life. We may doubt the significance of the blood that was smeared on the right earlobe. To me that suggests that by merely listening to God's Word, we will augment our faith: it is to listen with the right (correct) ear. Obviously the left ear will be the wrong one. In the Book of Mark and Matthew, many comparisons are made between the left and the right side: the left implies the wrong side, whereas the right side suggests the good. All God's utterances proceeded from His 'right side' and we need to incline ourselves to that direction. There are other examples in the Bible where the right ear is pierced. If after seven years, a slave decides to continue living with his master, he had to follow a certain ritual. Even though he was freed, and wanted to stay as his master was good towards him, he had to pierce his own right ear lobe unto the door post. Exodus 21:6; Deuteronomy 15:17 Typologically this implies that the slave is freed, and he can enter the door. He remained there, serving his previous master. In a similar manner Israel is freed as their previous Husband died. The Lord Jesus did die, and now they can serve the resurrected Lord as part of the new covenant. Romans 7:2,3 The piercing of the ear to the door post suggests that the slave can hear God's living

Word. Christ is the door that will lead us to life. John 10:7 Since we decided to unite ourselves with Christ, we are freed from the bondage of sin and slavery. No longer are we considered as slaves. Galatians 5:1 The ear listens to the living Word of God. The thumb opposes the other four fingers of the hand. From an anatomical point of view the fifth finger (thumb) is totally different from the other fingers: the four fingers oppose the thumb, yet they form a unity. The four fingers concern the material world that is characterised by the number four. An example is the four seasons. The thumb projects from a different angle and because it is the fifth, it suggests the hidden things of God: it witnesses God's involvement from the outside. In turn the mysteries also denote the Spirit, which is invisible. When we study Romans 8 vv. 26, 34 we will read the Spirit prays for us, and later it Christ who intercedes for us. Are they the same? Christ is the invisible Spirit, and our High Priest is portrayed by the number five. In a similar way the fifth toe also reflects the hidden things. The fifth toe and thumb (3 digits) are the longest, because the fifth dispensation is considered the longest and the most significant dispensation in God's history of salvation. The blood of the offerings suggests the hidden things, or the sway of the spiritual matters that do not belong to our world. In the priesthood the emphasis is on the fifth, as this number mainly concerns our fifth dispensation. We are called to hold on to the mystery with a clear conscience. 1 Timothy 3:9

Mark 2:1–12
And again he entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that he was in the house. 2 And soon many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and he preached the word unto them. 3 And they came unto him, bringing a paralytic, carried by four men. 4 And when they could not come near unto him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof of the house where he was; and when they had broken it open, they let down the bed in which the paralytic lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the paralytic, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and thinking in their hearts, 7 Why does this fellow so blaspheme? Who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And Jesus, knowing afterward in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, said unto them, why think ye these things in your hearts? 9 What is easier to say to the paralytic, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and take up thy bed and walk? 10 But that ye may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins (he spoke to the sick of the palsy), 11 I say unto thee, Arise and take up thy bed and go to thy house. 12 And by and by he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, we never saw anything like unto this.
Can you imagine what it would have been like to witness this miracle? Four men brought their paralyzed friend on a stretcher to a house where they heard Jesus was staying. Upon arrival, they discovered that the house was jammed with people, and many others were standing outside looking on, blocking all the doors and windows. There was no way to get

their friend close to Jesus. But they were not to be discouraged. The roofs of the houses in Capernaum were flat, and many of them had stairs that went from the outside of the house up to the roof. So they carried their paralyzed friend to the rooftop, to open the roof, to allow the true light from heaven to shine on them. What was Jesus thinking then? He was thinking about the faith of the men who were so bold to break the ‘cocoon’ of the religious leaders. The scribes and the Pharisees were trying to keep them out. The Bible says that it is impossible to please God without faith. Hebrews 11:6 Because of their faith, the paralyzed man was forgiven and completely healed within minutes. If they had no faith they would never have gone through so much trouble, and their friend would have remained unforgiven and paralyzed. When Jesus told him that his sins were forgiven, it caused quite a stir among the religious teachers who were present. They knew that only God could forgive sins, so Jesus claimed to be God! The Pharisees thought He was guilty of blasphemy saying something that was very offensive to God. Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking, so He proved, right before their eyes, that He had the right to forgive sins, also proving His deity. Anyone can pretend to have the authority to forgive sins as there will be no visible results. But no one can convincingly pretend to have authority to heal paralysis, because the result would be plain for everyone to see. When Jesus instantly healed the paralyzed man, it proved He had the authority to heal, and it gave credibility to His claim to be able to forgive sins. To us it proves that Jesus is God. ‘Forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.’ Acts 13:38 Instead of having a God opposing you as your judge, He now becomes our friend. People today think the words as grace and forgiveness belong solely to the New Testament. They don't understand the truths are also found in the Old Testament. From Adam on we see God acting in a forgiving way toward sinners. At the very beginning when Adam sinned, God did curse him, but immediately God sets about to kill an animal and to make garments and to cover Adam and Eve in an act that portrays a sacrifice. The slain animal was used to clothe Adam and Eve's shameful nakedness, but via the death of the animal, God pictures our Lord’s death and resurrection, to redeem us back to God. He paid the price of sin. Always God has demonstrated a willingness to forgive sin. Even in the laws of Moses God identifies Himself as a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth, keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin Exodus 34:6-7 Isaiah understood the forgiving nature of God as he wrote: ‘He will abundantly pardon.’ Isaiah 55:7 ‘Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.’ Isaiah 38:17 ‘And I will not remember your sins.’ Isaiah 43:25 Jesus did an astonishing thing. The scribes and the Pharisees soon began to reason saying, ‘who is this man who speaks blasphemously? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ So this passage reaches a high-water mark in the ministry of Jesus. We haven't been here before. This is the first time He has said this to somebody. He has been talking about preaching the good news to the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed. But this is a frank and blunt statement; ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you.’ Jesus is here claiming to have the authority to forgive sin. And thus He is

claiming to be God. He is either God or a blasphemer. Mark records this incident very early in the ministry of Jesus, so no doubt it happened very early in His ministry at Galilee. Matthew says it was in the city of Capernaum, indicating that it happened right after Jesus returned from the land of the Gadarenes, after freeing a possessed man, making the demons to enter a herd of pigs. Jesus ministry of forgiveness is the primary message He preached. The word about Him was spreading like wildfire and early in His ministry, the hostile authorities in Judaism were getting angrier and the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. John 5:16 They wanted Him dead and they kept pushing that issue until they finally got the Romans to crucify Him. To the Lord the Jewish leaders were the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed. The Jewish leaders felt offended and were outraged thinking they were the spiritually rich. They esteemed themselves as free and liberated. Luke focuses on some of the Pharisees and teacher of the law sitting there. Assuredly they were up close, and they loved to be seen of men. Jesus said in Matthew 23, they loved it when they were in the place of prominence. They were there to try and trap Jesus. They are the main players in the drama. They were set to trick Jesus as He threatened their comfortable status. If in the time of Jesus you wanted an interpretation of the law you went to the doctors of the law, to the scribes who made judgments on the matters related to the law. Now there was a large group of people and we have no idea how large they were. Matthew 9:1 tells us the house was Capernaum, his hometown. Mark 2:1 tells us He was at His home, and it could have been His own dwelling. The people offered Him no rest. It must have been a fairly large house to accommodate this group alone. The Pharisees and teachers of the law had come from every village all over Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, which would be enough to fill a good size house. Well Jesus provides these hostile visitors with an unforgettable experience and a formidable challenge to their theology. ‘Behold some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed.’ Well these men tried to bring him in and set him down in front of Jesus. But unfortunately they had no handicapped access and nobody moved. The crowds formed a barrier with their bodies and with their hearts. Our Lord must have felt stifled as there was no way to help the needy to enter the house. Cleverly they scaled the roof. They reached the top and there must have been a patio area and some portion of that roof were tiled; strong enough to support the people who walked on them. The word for ‘tile’ is keramos which is translated to the word ceramic. So they started to slowly peel the tiles from the roof. Now they've calculated exactly where Jesus is below, so that they can remove the right tiles to lower the man to see Jesus. The crowds noticed the paralysed person, hoisted down from the ceiling. Doesn’t it sound familiar? They had to physically break down the capsule or the cocoon to allow them to enter the house. It may have been the house Jesus lived in. They knew that the author of our salvation is in the house and He is the truthful, living way. John 14:6 Cunningly they avoided the teachers of the law who thought they could shield the Lord. The tiles they lifted were made from clay and they represent our works. Early in Israel’s history at Egypt, they were burdened making the many bricks. Pharaoh refused

Israel to leave Egypt and he actually increased the burden of the people by requiring more bricks. The crowds standing at the doorway, are the religious people and they prevented the people to reach our Lord. They prohibited any person He who refuses to comply with the law to see the true light. Orthodox Christianity want the masses to conform to 'their' rules, and simple faith in Christ is forbidden, telling us salvation it is not that simple. Salvation is simple only needing our simple faith, and the paralysed man can do nothing else but believe to attain his redemption. He was carried by 4 men and they broke the capsule of 'Christianity' and the roof they thought could protect man made religion. In Hebrew the word roof is translated as Gog, and they will judge Israel in the near future. Ezekiel 39 The roof needs to be opened to allow the light of the new covenant that is stifled by the religious leaders of the day. They had to break the capsule to find the truth. The people at the door refused Christ blocking the entry of the Gospel to a needy world. The people who felt 'accomplished,' blocked the door and they are more difficult to reach or to accept the simple truths of the Gospel. The bricks are first mentioned in the Bible when they built the tower of Babylon; it portrays the working of man, making them proud and arrogant. The evenly sized bricks or tiles are easily placed together fitting neatly, and the structure seems sound but it is flawed. They rejected the Stone who is Christ, preferring their own works of the law. One by one they removed the tiles from the roof, breaking the capsule or the principle of the law. Christ is the end of the law. Romans 10:4 Our Lord knew exactly what was inside the scribes and the Pharisees minds. As God, He knew everything. The paralyzed man was poor, a prisoner tied to his bed and oppressed. The first words our Lord spoke, did not heal him, but he simply said your sins are forgiven. We have a similar history in Luke 18, when a tax collector stood at a distance not daring to even lift his eyes to heaven when he prayed. He beat his chest sorrowfully saying, 'O God, be merciful to me.' In contrast the Pharisee prayed thanking God that he is not a sinner like everyone else. The Pharisee who told God how good he was, was not forgiven. There were two kinds of people in front of Jesus, the self-righteous and the wretched. Our Lord had to teach the teachers of the law, asking which is easier to say to a paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Rise up and walk'? It seems to me that 'Your sins are forgiven' is easier. Why? Sins are between people and God, and their forgiveness remains invisible, like God who is invisible. You can't see or taste the forgiveness of sins. You can notice the healing of a lame man. Anyone can say, 'your sins are forgiven,' and there is no immediate evidence that the person is a fraud. If someone says to a paralytic, 'get up and walk,' the evidence for or against the person's authority over sin is immediate and visible to all. The forgiveness of sins is something that becomes real to us when we believe it, not because we see it. The man's joy in being forgiven was experienced through faith, not through sight. The healing of his legs, on the other hand, was experienced through sight — he didn't need faith to walk; he simply had to get up. Unless we do believe the Gospel is true, we will go on living as though Christ never existed. But when we do believe the Gospel, we are overwhelmed by the joy of what Christ has done for us.

Jesus told the Pharisees, ‘but I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So He said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home. "’ To believers, this is unnecessary. We already believe that the Son of man has power to forgive sins. We don’t need a sign of Jesus’ power to demonstrate the fact that he has authority to forgive sins. We feel it and know it as the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit. Romans 8:16 Signs are meant for unbelievers. Paul was an unbeliever and an enemy of the Gospel, persecuting the believers. When Jesus appeared to him in person on the road to Damascus, he became a believer. We are not like doubting Thomas who wanted to touch the physical wounds of the resurrected Christ. Rumour goes around making people believe if they really trusted God for healing, they would be healed. So when people are not healed, they feel guilty. They look for the imaginary ‘secret sin’ that is keeping them from being healed. Fake Christians keep telling them they need to pray fervently, to prompt God to reveal their sins so they can get healed. They might tell the sick person that he or she needs more faith, and prescribe more prayer and Bible study and fasting as a means to get God to heal them. That’s not the truth or the Gospel as I understand it; it reduces God to the level of the ancient pagan gods and tyrants. Jesus Christ is not like those gods. False religion depend on their ‘own works’ thinking they can satisfy a righteous God. We who belong to Christ, depend on His work for us. Religion has no part in the Gospels. Like the paralytic, we know our sins are forgiven, and it matters. If we are healed, it is an added blessing. The paralytic person and Lazarus who was raised from the dead, died. Every person who was healed in the past did die, and unless Jesus returns with the rapture, we too will die, whether we were healed, diseased or not. What matters most to us today is our relationship with the resurrected Christ, knowing our sins are forgiven. We may die but never taste death as we are already placed with Christ in heaven. John 8:51 Ephesians 2:5

Mark 2:13-16
And he went again unto the sea; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. 15 And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at the table in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also at the table together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many and they had followed him. 16 And the scribes and Pharisees, seeing him eat with publicans and sinners, said unto his disciples, how is it that he eats and drinks with publicans and sinners?
This history is also mentioned in Matthew 9 and Luke 5. This is the first mention of the Apostle Matthew, and not much more is spoken of him, except that the Book of Matthew is written by him. The Book of Matthew is very similar to the Book of Mark. The Book of Luke tells us more of this history saying a vast group of tax collectors followed our Lord to have a meal with Him. The religious people gleaned on them very jealously, who were wrapped up with the ethical issues. To the Jewish leaders our Lord was like a thorn in the flesh, and they constantly looked for the

opportunity to twist His Words and actions. We as our Lord Jesus are not part of this world and we will suffer, directed mostly from the religious leaders. History is pretty clear about this. The Pharisees were disgusted when they noticed our Lord with the vilest of men. Our Lord Jesus always had a clear vision why He came to earth. He says: Luke 19:10 ‘For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’ Jesus happened to be the guest of a man who is deemed the greatest of sinners, and later He even dared to have a meal with the chief tax collector, called Zacchaeus. Luke 19 Jesus is saying, He is going to be the guest of a great sinner because He wanted the world to know the real reason why He came earth; to seek and to save those who are lost in sin. Tax collectors like Levi were Jews but they worked for the Romans. Tax collectors were notorious for boosting their incomes. The Jews hated them deeming them as thieves but also as collaborators with the enemy! The Romans would simply look away as the tax collectors cheated the people, taking more than what was required. When Levi responded to Jesus’ call to follow him, he had to leave his professional life forever. Unlike Simon, Andrew, James and John who were fishermen, Levi worked as a hated tax collector. As such, he would not have been welcomed back to his unsavoury job after following Jesus. Further, Levi’s life and ethics changed to the point he never wanted to return to his job of being a tax collector. Levi had to leave his job completely.
Mark 2:15-16 says while Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the ‘sinners’ and tax collectors, they asked his disciples, ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ This particular crowd of tax collectors disturbed the Pharisees greatly! It was an offense for a Jew to eat with Gentiles. Even though tax collectors were Jewish, they were often viewed as Gentiles by pious Jews like the Pharisees. Levi’s party featured many tax collectors and so the Pharisees were very angry and upset that Jesus did commune with them. In Luke 19 we read of another publican who is named Zacchaeus. He was no ordinary tax collector, but a chief tax collector, which made the people despise the man all the more. In light of the public hatred of tax collectors, it is significant that every time they are mentioned by Luke, it is in a favourable light. Luke 3:12; 5:27; 7:29; 15:1; 18:10; 19:2 In fact Jesus chose Levi, or Matthew to be one of His 12 apostles! This shows Jesus’ heart for sinners and the transforming power of His saving grace. Once we belong to Christ we will never be favoured by society. Jesus caused a stir amongst the religious people, and we too, will always be in the minority. We are not moulded by any institution. Even in the Book of Genesis the believers were in the minority. Similarly we read in Matthew 13:1 that Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea side. The house is Judah, or the Jewish nations The sea represents the Gentile nations or the 10 lost tribes of Israel, living on the coastline. When later in the chapter our Lord sat on the boat, he spoke to the people from the sea, (sea of nations) directing His message to the people on land, who resemble the Jewish nations. It is comparable to us today when the main body of the Church

are the Gentile nations, and the Gospel is entrusted to us, to reach the Jewish nations. In the previous chapter Matt. 12 our Lord even distanced Himself from His family, and he rested by the sea. A great crowd followed Him and He taught them. The crowds resemble the Church. Mark 2 says our Lord left the synagogue to go the Sea of Galilee, and en-route they had to enter the toll house. There they met the tax collector named Matthew. He was called Levi and why? It is remind us of the priesthood of Levi, the 13th tribe of Israel. The law and the priesthood of Levi in the Old Testament is a foreshadow of the High Priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek. Once our Lord did resurrect from the dead, then the priesthood of Levi and the law was made redundant. Today it serves no purpose. It is pictured in the history of the Good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite could not help the slain victim, even if they wanted to help him. Only our Lord as part of the new covenant could help him, as He alone is the Good Samaritan. The Jewish nations lost their ancestry and they have no idea who could be priest today. The Levites were encumbered with the priesthood, and certainly Matthew was incompetent obeying the Romans. With Christ resurrection from the dead, it spelled the end of the Levitical priestly duty. However the Levites are mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel, and during the Millennium there will be Levites. Say a person proved to be a Levite during the Millennium, then he will become a Levite not after the order of Aaron but rather after the order of Melchizedek, the new covenant. In this history a Levite is called by the Lord and He followed the Lord Jesus including his household. Matthew is the Greek name and Levi was the Hebrew name. As a tax collector, Matthew worked for Greek-speaking Romans. He gathered taxes from Hebrew-speaking Jews. Being a Levite, we can reflect of the risen Christ as He is our High Priest. His father is called Alphaeus and in Greek it is translated as changing, as Christ changed the priestly order of Aaron to the priestly order of Melchizedek. He is a publican and the word is found 21 times in the New Testament and the publicans were not popular, as they are likened to the whores. Matthew 21:31 Matthew was a Jew and a publican. Sadly to say but to the Jews he lost citizenship and esteem, to portray the 10 lost tribes of Israel. In turn they became part of the new covenant. In reality our Lord says that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them (Jewish nation) and it will be given to a nation producing fruit. Matthew 21:43 The Jews proved to be blind and untrue, serving the enemy; but the publicans and the whores, or the other nations who used to serve other gods, will repent. You never read in the Bible that a man is caught in adultery, but only the woman. If a man is condemned, then he is likened to the publican. Any woman who is a whore, pictures natural Israel who forsook God. The publicans are scorned as they don’t seek the interest of the Jewish nations, employed by their enemy the Romans. Thus he is likened to the whore. In the parable of the ‘lost son,’ Luke 15 the son who remained with his father got bitter and he resembles the Jewish nations and the son who spend everything after he left his father, did repent. In the aftermath the son who returned portrays the 10 lost tribes of Israel who did repent. It will be easier to picture the dissimilarity in the following table.

The kingdom of God will be taken	**It will be given to a people bringing forth**

away from	**fruit.**
them (Jews)	(10 lost tribes of Israel)
Pharisees	Whores and the publicans
The son who remained with his father	The lost son
The daughter of Jairus	The woman with the bleeding disorder
Martha who was distracted with much serving	Mary anointing Jesus feet with expensive nard perfume

The High Priestly duty of Christ Hebrews 7 exceeds the Old Testament priestly duty as it is far better. The Book of Hebrews is the book of ‘better things’, as in total there are 14 of them. The 10 lost tribes of Israel were lost in the Assyrian captivity, but they will surface and return, accepting the message of Christ. Christ made us kings and priests. The Apostle Paul says we are no longer foreigners but fellow citizens and members of God’s household. Christ Jesus Himself is the Chief cornerstone and we are jointly fitted together in Him, part of God’s holy temple in heaven. Ephesians 2:19-22 Now the big question is who is the ‘nation’ when our Lord says; it will be given to a nation who will bear fruit. Matthew 21:43 Is it the Church or the 10 lost tribes of Israel? When our Lord spoke the words, the Church was not formed. I believe the nation is the 10 lost tribes of Israel, and they are reckoned as part of the Gentile nations. When we study Romans 9 to 11 we will have great difficulty if we refuse to accept the notion of the lost tribes of Israel. In Romans the Apostle Paul uses the example of grafting to explain how some Gentiles are saved along with some Jews – they are all placed into the same body. The Old Testament is clear that Israel is an ‘olive tree,’ and who are the ‘wild olive tree’? They are the lost tribes of Israel and they will replace some of the ‘natural’ branches. (Physical Jews) The natural branches were cut from the fruit bearing olive tree, due to their unbelief. Romans 11:20 They forfeited their promises refusing the resurrected Christ. The Gentiles (lost tribe of Israel) accepted the Gospel in contrast to the Jewish nation. The believing Gentile converts did bear much fruit. The fruit of the tree is the Church, but the natural olive tree are the Jewish nations and the wild olive tree are the 10 lost tribes of Israel. The lost tribes of Israel is an olive tree even if they are wild bearing no fruit. Many think the wild olive tree are the raw heathen nations who accepted Christ as their Saviour. In a certain sense it is true but I believe the Apostle Paul is really referring to the 10 lost tribes of Israel who were lost in the sea of nations. There is a telling phrase used by Paul in Romans 11:25-26, to emphasize who he is talking about. ‘For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel (all 12 tribes) will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. ”’ Here the Apostle Paul tells us the Jewish people are blinded to the truth. Things will change once the fullness of the Gentiles transpired. Today the wild olive branches is grafted into the fruit bearing olive tree to replace the branches that were broken off. Once ‘the fullness of the Gentiles’ transpired, then things will change. What is meant by the phrase ‘the fullness of the Gentiles’? It commences with the rapture of the Church and then everything will

become as it was when our Lord resurrected from the dead. There was a special symbiosis between the wild and the fruit bearing tree that lasted for 2000 years, but it will end once the Church is physically with Christ in heaven. All believers will leave the earth but the tree will sprout again. Many theologians suggest that the Bible does not teach eternal salvation. They maintain the Bible teaches us that the Christians can be "cut off" from the olive tree, forfeiting their salvation. Romans 11:22 This is unsettling as our Lord promised us eternal life. The only way out of this, is to agree that the branches of the wild olive tree are the 10 lost tribes of Israel and they will be ‘cut off’ from the fruit bearing tree, to depict the time when the Church is physically in heaven with Christ. It stands to reason as every true born again Christian will go to heaven. There will be no believers left on earth, except for the 2 witnesses at Jerusalem. Revelation 11 When the Jewish nations do respond positively to the message of the 2 witnesses, then the tree will shoot new branches, to start anew. The wild branches grafted into the fruit bearing olive tree are the Gentile nations but I believe the Apostle Paul wishes to tell us more. Unknowingly to the world the greatest volume of the Church belong to the 10 lost tribes of Israel. We as the Church are the fruit of the tree and not the branches. We will never be ‘cut off’ or lose our salvation. Levi portrays the 10 lost tribes of Israel and similarly Zacchaeus the chief tax collector who climbed in the fig and not the olive tree. Our Lord did visit them, and had a meal with them. He visited their houses – the house of Israel or the 10 lost tribes of Israel. The Lord took him from the tree leading him to Zacchaeus house. It portrays the same history as Levi. Our Lord knew where the house was and went to the lost tribes of Israel. What did they do inside the house? They communed having a meal. Many undesirable people followed them to the meal. We can expect a reaction from the religious leaders and they queried why he had a meal with them. A meal has always the same importance, meaning to commune with the person you share the meal with. Sitting at Matthew’s dinner table, Jesus may have broken some societal bars, but His presence there shows that He looked beyond culture to the people’s hearts. Jesus also went beyond the culture bounds when He conversed with the Samaritan woman at the well —even His disciples were surprised by that. John 4:27 Jesus forgives an immoral woman, Luke 7 helps a Syro-Phoenician woman, Mark 7 He touches a leper, Luke 5 He enters Zacchaeus’s house. Luke 19 Tradition, cultural bans, and the frowns of the religious people did not matter to Him when a soul’s eternal destiny is on the line. As the Good Shepherd, He sought the lost sheep wherever they strayed. The meal was a wonderful opportunity to share the good news of the kingdom. Jesus transcended cultural norms and spend much time with the outcasts of society. This incidence makes us think of David who escaped to the cave of Adullam. He gathered a company of 400 men who were in distress, who were in debt and in discontent. David became a captain over them. 1 Samuel 22:1-2 It is interesting that when David became an outcast, rejected and hunted by the King, he identified himself with the distasteful people. David was the anointed of the Lord and even though he was anointed to become the king of Israel, David never pursued to gain anything by his

own means. He was tested, and several times were given the opportunity to kill Saul, and he would have been justified, but David never raised his hand against Saul. David became the outcast and it was not through his rebellion or disobedience. The people we seem to trust thinking they will embrace us, thinking they are our spiritual leaders in the community, may reject us. They operate under a religious spirit, having the pretence and the appearance of the real, but their interest is to control and dominate. One stimulating thought is that King David and our Lord attracted the sinner, the distressed, the debtor, the discontented and the needy. They have already experienced the disappointments of the world, they are hoping and looking for something and someone not of this world, someone different. Look at the people that both David and Jesus were surrounded with. They were not the socialites or the elite. The Apostle Paul says the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18 Many of us know that we are nothing by the world's standards. We are not exceptional, outstanding or distinguishable in the eyes of the world. But God is not like the world and He sees something valuable and significant in us. God chose the foolish things (people) of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

There are two ordinances which Jesus Christ has instituted and established for His Church. An ordinance is a 'prescribed practice.' An ordinance is something that the Church practices because Jesus Christ has told her to do so. The New Testament makes it very clear that the early Church practiced the baptism and the communion. We lost the meaning of a meal, when we share the same food. Any meal is a time of happiness when we recount all the experiences we had during the day. In the Greek a meal is derived from the word 'gamos' which could either be translated as a marriage festival, a wedding banquet, or a wedding feast. It is a joyful time when the families of the bride and the bridegroom meet.

Jesus was the guest of a tax collector and many other friends. Later He was the guest of a 'leader of the Pharisees.' (Luke 14) The Pharisee and his friends invited Jesus to test Him to find if He complied with their interpretation of the Law. Since it was the Sabbath, all the food would have been prepared ahead of time. The setting was rather different: in front of Him there was a man suffering from dropsy (14:2). Dropsy is fluid retention. He may have been placed there to provoke Jesus to break the Sabbath by healing him. The Pharisees watched Jesus closely to notice if He washed his hands in the ritual fashion. Would He heal? Jesus did ask their permission.

Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?' But they remained silent (14:3–4). None of them spoke a word, so no one could accuse Jesus of wrongdoing if the man was healed. In the end, He healed the man with dropsy and sent him away (14:4). He cured him. This dinner was filled with tension, and it appears as if they only had their own wellbeing and interests at heart—and not those of the less fortunate. When He noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, He told them this parable: 'When someone invites

you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited.' There was a pecking order among the Pharisee group, but the guests of the Lord were not really free to sit where they wished. Our Lord says, at best, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' The 'moral' of the story is: 'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted' (14:11). In His second parable, Jesus' remarks were not over yet. It proved the Pharisees were not concerned about the man with dropsy, or to enjoy Jesus' company and learn from Him. The Pharisee who invited Jesus wished to enhance their own status, as He was well received in Galilee. Then Jesus said to His host, 'When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous' (14:12–14). Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

Lastly, we have the parable of the guests who were invited to dinner. God, in His own way, invites the people to His own table—not to those who can do something for Him, who can bring Him expensive gifts, but the distressed, the oppressed, those who have nothing to bring: the crushed and broken-hearted. The Father invites them to His table, not to help Himself, but to help them. Not to receive a blessing, but to bless.

It proved that the previously invited guests had poor excuses and they declined the invitation. They were the Jews. The people who responded were the unlikable and the poor, but they responded to God's calling.

The following chapter commences with the disgusting attitude of the Pharisees towards the Lord Jesus, saying: 'This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them' (15:2). It is like King David, who became an outcast after he was persecuted by Saul. 'So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they visited him there. And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him, and he became captain over them. Now, there were about 400 men with him.' Yes, we as the body of Christ are the outcasts, crushed and broken-hearted. Our heritage is of poor standing.

Mark 2:17

'When Jesus heard it, He said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance. '

Those who are healthy don't need the doctor, but the people who are ill do need one. Sinners are ill and need the Master, and they frequented our Lord. We as the Church are not the esteemed of the world, and the quicker we realise this, the better. Most people have the knack to direct any unpleasant weakness away from themselves—anything that may reveal their incompetence—and if they cannot hide it, they are pretty good at explaining it away, to protect their public standing. So what are we to

make of the Apostle Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 11:30, when he says, 'If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weaknesses'? The esteemed Christians at Corinth were good at amassing lists of noteworthy achievements that would set them apart from those less gifted. For them, image was everything. If the Apostle Paul had to boast, it would be done in such a manner that all praise would go to God. If he had to boast, it would be in the things that show his weakness. Paul had many opponents at Corinth, who viewed Paul's lack of worldly success as proof that his apostolic claims were fake. Paul chose to boast in his weaknesses, in order that the all-sufficient and limitless power of the Lord might be revealed in him. It simply means we can totally depend on the strength of Christ to accomplish His work in us, if we are either weak, lame, or riddled by any chronic disease. We will not comply with the norms of the religious Jews who deem themselves as the blessed. That is vividly portrayed in a prayer of the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14). The Pharisee prayed boastingly, thinking he followed the law. It seemed as if he did not need God. He assumed the role of a judge and despised the others. He reminds God of the 'sin' of the tax collector, in case God did not notice. The prayer of the publican to God was simple: he asked for mercy and forgiveness. At the end, the tax collector is justified by God, and the Pharisee needed nothing and asked for nothing; so he received nothing. In contrast, the publican recognised his need and happily received God's gift of salvation. The today's atheist argues only the weak people need God, and since they feel comfortable in themselves needing nothing, they reason God out of the equation. We in turn depend on the wisdom of Christ, knowing we need a 'helping hand' we can rely on. We have many weaknesses and assuredly we need a physician.

Mark 2:18–22
'And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees did fast, and therefore came and said unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can those who are in a wedding fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast in those days. No one mends an old garment with a new piece of cloth, or else the new piece that filled it up tears away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, and the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are lost; but new wine must be poured into new wineskins. '
The only possible mandate to fast in the Old Testament is the Day of Atonement. I doubt this, as the word 'fast' is not found in Leviticus 16, but merely the word 'afflict', 'humble', or 'deny'. The attested verb is the Hebrew verb 'anah' (Strong's no. 6031). Leviticus 16:31 says the Great Day of Atonement will be a Sabbath unto them, and they need to 'humble' themselves; other translations of the Bible say they had to deny or afflict themselves. To me, there is no mention of any possible fast, and Moses never sought to turn a festive day into something unpleasant. The rabbis wrongfully 'read' the word 'fasting', thinking merely fasting could afflict

their soul. I believe fasting is not expressed nor implied in Leviticus 16, but rather repentance. To inflict yourself with hunger on a festive day is absurd. For Israel, the Great Day of Atonement is a momentous day when their sins are forgiven—and why fast when we are freed from our sins? It will be rude to fast when your daughter gets married.

After the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish nation decided to continue with their fast days to commemorate the fall of Jerusalem, when the Jewish nation got captured. Their temple burned to the ground. It was their own doing. Their fasts were established during their exile (Zechariah 7:3–5; 8:19). All the other major religions of the world had their days of fasting, and they did not want to differ from the other nations. With the fasting we have the many other ceremonies, like the tearing of the garments, putting on sackcloth, refraining from washing the face or the anointing with oil. All such observances were, of course, liable to become mere formalities, and the danger of this was recognised by the prophets (Isaiah 58:3–7; Joel 2:12–13; Zechariah 7:5–6; Matthew 6:16–18). Many Old Testament prophets and believers resorted to fasting in order to avert calamity or to elicit God’s compassion. The prophets agreed true meekness and remorse is worthless if not accompanied by a repentant heart.

What is the use of fasting if we are not overweight? Some argue, saying it is written in the Bible and the Jews in the synagogues do fast, so we too need to fast. What’s the need if we have such a bright future ahead of us? In the Book of Zechariah (8:19), two post-exile Jews were specifically sent to Zechariah to enquire from the Lord if the people of Israel had to continue with their fasting days. They were nominated by the Jewish religious leaders during the Babylonian captivity. The Lord was clear when He spoke to Zechariah, prompting the two messengers and the Jewish nation not to fast on the 4th, 5th, 7th, and 10th months, as those days of mourning will become a joyful and momentous event. There are no valid reasons to fast, and the sad days will be an occasion for great joy. Jerusalem will be rebuilt—and certainly it is built in heaven today. There will be total harmony, and all the bad experiences of the past will be forgotten. In Christ we have true peace, and everything is harmonised in Him.

The deceit of the religious Jews was obvious when they rejected the advice of the two messengers they sent, deciding to rather punish their own bodies. They revered human traditions, gratifying their own flesh. Instead, they should have repented to get to the root of their problems. They delude the people with their fake practices, thinking God will approve their torturing and remorse. Fasting demurred their general outlook on life, their eating habits, their clothes—dragging them down. We are part of a total new creation, and to us everything became new. Why should we be bungled down by the old? The old is done and dusted. Why do we need to mourn the burning of the old temple if the new temple is built inside of us and we are the building blocks? Our Lord says no one mends an old garment with a new piece of cloth, or pours new wine into old wineskins. We are totally part of the new, and the old will never drag us down.

On the Day of Atonement, the people had to humble themselves—and what is the purpose of fasting on a festive day, or for us to fast, knowing our sins are dealt with?

Remember, the rules and regulations of the Great Day of Atonement were merely meant for the Israelites who lived within the borders of Israel, and not the world in general. The word ‘eternal’ is translated from the Hebrew word ‘owlam’ (Strong’s no. 5769), and it is also translated as ‘ancient’ (Proverbs 22:28). The law is aimed at Israel living inside the ancient borders of Israel. The laws are not binding today. The Apostle Paul forewarned the Christians of the practices of some Christians who oppose God, destabilising and confusing them, to lead them away from the truth. The greatest obstacle imaginable today is to observe the many laws of Moses, thinking it will justify us.

‘Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power’ (Colossians 2:8–10). The Colossians ought not to be tangled with the curses of the law; they are sinless, and Christ today is our High Priest interceding for us. He blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, nailing it to the cross; He spoiled the principalities and powers, triumphing over them (Colossians 2:14–15). Therefore, no man can judge us in what we eat or drink, or in respect of any festival, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which is a mere shadow of the things to come (Colossians 2:16–17). The real light appeared—and why bother about the shadow? The law is a mere shadow of the real to come, and since our Lord is resurrected, why do we need to be sorrowful? We need to be humble, and there is no need to afflict ourselves. We are imparted with the new.

For national Israel, the primary reason for the observance of the yearly Day of Atonement was to settle their domestic sins in order for the Creator God to dwell among them for another year.

Once the Apostle Paul reprimanded Peter because he was setting a wrong example by his hypocritical behaviour, causing the elect to stumble. The Apostle Paul says only through Christ’s sacrifice a person can be justified, and our feeble works of the flesh will never suffice (Galatians 2:11–16). Traditionally, the Jews were forbidden to eat with the Gentiles, thinking that this close friendship would defile them.

The works of the Law include the rituals performed during all the festivals. If a person seeks to be made innocent through the sacrifice of Christ, to later voluntarily place himself under the Laws of Moses, thinking it will justify him, is sheer blasphemy. We are justified through the sacrifice of Christ, and any work of the law is counter-productive. If we do return to the law, then we deny the power of Christ’s sacrifice, thinking He cannot deal with our sins. It is like returning to our own vomit. The Apostle Paul argues we are dead to the law. We are deemed dead, but Christ is alive in our dead bodies. Our dead bodies are possessed by Christ, and we are like the walking dead.

‘For if ye are dead with Christ to the elements of the world, why, as though living unto the world, do ye decree rites: touch not; taste not;

handle not?' (Colossians 2:20–21). The law kills us, and we died with Christ's crucifixion. The law judged us, and we are dead to its penalty. The law cursed us to death, and we did pay its penalty. Paul's argument is: if we seek justification through our obedience to the law, then Christ's sacrifice is meaningless to us. Our vessel or body is fragile, but it embraces the imperishable.

Early in the Church's history, some Christians believed that their obedience to the Laws of Moses was essential to please God. Because of this, a council of elders was convened in Jerusalem to resolve this issue. 'And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved' (Acts 15:1–6). The edict of Acts 15 is that the Gentiles are justified through Christ's sacrifice, and the Jewish rituals are not binding for the Gentiles. God has no dual standards in order for us to be justified and to remain pure.

Symbolically, all the Old Testament sacrifices, including the Day of Atonement, pointed to the future complete sacrifice of Christ, to forgive our sins. Why do we need to fast if His work is accomplished in us? The law and its many rituals are a mere shadow of what is to be expected through Christ. No matter how diligently the rituals are performed, it will have no foothold on us. Sin could not be forgiven under the camouflage of Moses, but since Christ died for us, we are freed from the curse. Through Christ's sacrifice, we obtained forgiveness for all our past, present, and future sins, to be ruled innocent and pure, to be in total harmony with our heavenly Father. We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and don't need to fast to guarantee His presence within us. He promised He will never forsake us. Therefore, there is no need to fast, and to us the Great Day of Atonement was accomplished 2000 years ago. Today our Lord is our High Priest who cleanses us each minute. Even though some may have medical reasons to fast, I will never object to them. We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us, and there are no valid religious reasons for a fast. Christ lives inside of us—so why are we bothered about this issue? We are not tied to any ritualistic system.

Inarguably, in the Old Testament there is no Scripture to encourage fasting. The rabbis interpret fasting as the affliction of the soul. I believe fasting is not expressed nor implied in Leviticus 16, but rather repentance. To inflict yourself with hunger on a day of festival is absurd, and it is not in harmony with the Gospel. Since Christ's universal atonement, we were made right by Christ, and He lives inside of us. The Jews fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday, as part of their religious devotion (Luke 18:12). Fasting is a common practice amongst the Jews, and it was continued by some early Christians.

Yet there were others like Anna who fasted often (Luke 2:37).

The only time in Scripture when Jesus fasted was during His temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–4; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–4). As with the Old Testament prophets, Jesus fasted when He was faced with intense spiritual needs. During the remainder of Jesus' public ministry, there is not the slightest hint that Jesus fasted. Before Christ's terrible struggle at Gethsemane, He feasted with His disciples rather than fasting.

Jesus rebuked fasting when it was a mere outward manifestation or parade of the flesh, and not as an inward act of devotion to God. ‘When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you’ (Matthew 6:16–18). Fasting today is inappropriate. Times of rejoicing are not times to fast (Matthew 9:14–17). During a time of joy, any fasting is uncalled for. We don’t need to be like the hypocrites who go out of their way to look miserable to impress people; to let others know how ‘holy’ they are by fasting. To look miserable in order to be thought holy is futile and beyond hypocrisy to God, who blessed us so much. Jesus suggests that those who fast with such hypocrisy will not have their prayers answered by God. Their reward is the praise of men. Jesus instructs us how to fast if we feel like doing it. We need to put oil on our head and wash our faces—and it was the expected thing to do when they walked outside. It had to be done discreetly. When we fast, we need to go through our normal daily routine and dress normally, to be careful not to draw any attention to our fast. After all, we are not fasting to get the attention of man, but to get the attention of God. Be sure, God ‘sees what is done in secret’, and He will reward us.

In the Book of Acts, we read of fasting and prayer (13:2–3). It was only done on special occasions (13:14, 23). It also happened with the Apostle Paul’s conversion (9:9–12). Fasting is not an essential ingredient for prayer, even though it is joined to prayer. Prayer is decreed in the New Testament, but fasting is not regulated. Just a survey of the Book of Acts reveals the absence of fasting, but they prayed often. Fasting is noticeably missing from the New Testament Epistles. Even though the noun form is found in 2 Corinthians 6:5 and 11:27, one detects that in neither context it is sensed as if it was part of a religious fast. We can conclude that fasting was not overtly practised during the apostolic period.

In the latter time of the Church’s history, we discover that fasting was practised, and they mandated fasting twice a week—changing the days from Mondays and Thursdays to Wednesdays and Fridays. Martin Luther and John Calvin did not object to fasting, and the excessive emphasis upon fasting is, perhaps, the reason why the word ‘fasting’ is wrongly inserted into the following Scriptures: Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29; Acts 10:30. Soon in the Church’s history, they conformed to the other religions of the world, introducing the fasting days.

If we deny the flesh to fast, then we run a risk. Unknown to many, it is an open invitation for the demonic powers to control our body. The weaker we are, the stronger the spiritual influence becomes in our lives. The evil powers of Satan wish to control our flesh and senses. We can deny our flesh in many different ways. They are:

Fasting: Evangelical fasts have become increasingly popular in recent years, with people fasting for spiritual nourishment or to petition God for special needs. It is believed that fasting takes the individual to a higher spiritual realm. Soon we will hallucinate and see things that are not real.

Alcoholics don’t eat, and they ‘see pink elephants’. It is a euphemism for drunken hallucination. Anorexia proves difficult to treat, as many young children are influenced by spirits, encouraging them to remain ill. It is difficult to imagine an obese witch.
Eliminating meat, especially red meat, will improve our psychic abilities. A predominantly plant-based diet helps you to become more open and sensitive to the spirit world. They maintain meat dulls our senses, lowering our vibration.
Tranquilliser and drug abuse. It is another way to experience spiritual awakening. As the drugs continually weaken the person’s energy, it opens the portals to all kinds of forces, as well as raising their vibration and connection to higher energies. The possibility exists of a large-scale awakening. The risk of drugs inducing a psychosis is greatly increased, especially with someone who is young. For them to suddenly stop the medication or drug abuse is risky, and they are too immature to handle any drug withdrawal that may last for many years. The doctors are convinced that they were simply having a psychotic episode, and remedy them with more sedative drugs like anti-depressants, antipsychotics, or anti-anxiety drugs, thinking it will integrate them back into society. Drugs are expensive, and fasting is an easier option to invite the ‘unknown’.
Meditation. Via meditation, we can open the channels to communicate with the unknown spiritual realm. With meditation, we enter an altered state of consciousness. The emptying of our mind is the first step to open the ‘doorway’, which is in fact a ‘demonic doorway’. They maintain it is our 3rd or middle eye. It agrees with the teachings of the New World Order or the New Age. In Buddhism, the middle eye is known as the Shiva, and in Hinduism it is the eye of clairvoyance. In Egypt, it is known as the Eye of Horus or the Eye of Osiris, and in Freemasonry it is the All-Seeing Eye, as printed on a dollar bill. No matter what ‘religion’ is involved, the meaning of the eye remains the same: the passing into a dangerous spiritual portal for enlightenment—and they believe it is harmless. Satan told Eve in Genesis 3:5–7: ‘For God doth know … then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil, and the eyes of them both were opened.’ The serpent was claiming that their eye would open, and their ‘knowledge’ would increase. This verse is not talking about a physical organ, but the eye of the soul. Today we stumble upon the same, thinking our ‘third eye’ will open a new and better future. They think to open the ‘third eye’ or the ‘pineal gland’ is a harmless spiritual experience that is needed for our spiritual maturity, but they are dead wrong. In truth, practising things like horoscopes and divination is an open invitation for demons to enter our lives. Deceiving spirits will distract us from the truth or Christ. This video is self-explanatory.

Mark 2:23–28
‘And it came to pass that as He went through the planted fields again on the Sabbath day, His disciples began, as they walked, to pluck the ears of grain. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful? And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did when he had need and was hungry, he and

those that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to those who were with him? And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; therefore the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath. ’
Continually in the Gospels, there is discord between the religious leaders and our Lord, and slowly our Lord distanced Himself from Judea and the Jewish community to preach in Galilee. Endlessly they criticised Him, probing Him with many questions to try and fault Him. In this passage, they asked Jesus why He did not conform to their laws or to the Sabbath. Jesus talks about how David went into the house of God and ate the showbread ‘in the days’ of Abiathar the high priest. In 1 Samuel 21, it says that David came to Ahimelech, not Abiathar, when he eventually ate the showbread. So was Ahimelech the high priest and not Abiathar? Abiathar was Ahimelech’s son.
‘Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech’s son, Please bring the ephod here to me. And Abiathar brought the ephod to David’ (1 Samuel 30:7). It was Ahimelech, the current High Priest, who allowed David to eat the showbread (1 Samuel 21:1–9). Abiathar witnessed how King Saul killed Ahimelech and his household for helping David, but Abiathar escaped narrowly (1 Samuel 22:9–20). The event with the showbread occurred during the life of Abiathar, who was a High Priest—it just did not happen while he was High Priest. It is like saying, ‘when King David was a boy’. When King David was a boy, he was not a king, but it is right to say that when King David was a boy, such an incident happened, and it would be perfectly understood. No one will say, ‘Ah, but David was not a king when he was a boy?’ In the same way, Jesus says, ‘In the days of Abiathar, the high priest’, which does not mean Abiathar was high priest at that time. Not only did David eat the showbread, which was sacred and set before the Lord and only meant for the priests, but worse: he did this on a Sabbath day. He did not eat of it himself, but he shared it with the soldiers that were with him. All this happened with the full knowledge of the high priest. David had a company of servants with him when he fled King Saul, and they did not accompany him when he went to the high priest to ask for the bread. In this company, King David can be regarded as the resurrected Christ, and his servants as the Church today. The disciples of Jesus are His servants, and the religious people should not trouble our Lord and His disciples when they plucked and rubbed a few ears of corn with their hands to satisfy their hunger, even though it was on a Sabbath day. He made the Pharisees aware that indeed the Lord Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath, and He is standing in their midst.
The Jews’ continual conflict with our Lord.
This is a very complex and provocative topic and begs discussion. With that being said, we must make one thing very clear. From all the nations of the world, God entrusted Israel to preach His Word and to convey it to all the nations of the world. Sadly, it did not happen in the past, but it will happen in the near future. No nation on earth is any better than Israel. God chose Israel to manifest the weaknesses we all have, including any nation on earth. No nation on earth is blameless or better than Israel or

the Jews. The other reason why God gave them the laws and the Ten Commandments to Moses is to teach them the working of the law on our bodies. It turns sour, and it does not agree with our bodies. We will notice how Satan used all the laws to his advantage. He used the many laws to amplify them, and the end result is the Talmud and all the wickedness that accompanied it. Let me explain.

Many Christians today think by studying God's commandments in the Old Testament, or fostering the Jewish religion, will bolster their salvation, since 'salvation is of the Jews' (John 4:22). Many Christians will go out of their way to bless the Jews, thinking then God will favour them. Major Evangelical leaders who are dispensationalists believe the Jews are God's special chosen people, who do not need to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved; but instead, they think the Jewish nation will be saved purely by their race. They also support the slaughter of the Palestinians by the Jews to vacate the land for Israel, triggering the Jews to rebuild the Third Temple on the Temple Mount at Jerusalem. They think it will facilitate or hasten the second coming of Christ. They also endorse the destruction of all the enemies of the Jews, including the Iraqis, the Iranians, the Lebanese, the Syrians, etc. , because they have been deceived into believing that God will bless those who bless the Jews, no matter how wicked they are.

Many Evangelical churches promote a false theology, encouraging Israel and the Jews at every turn, even to the denial of Jesus Christ. But the fact is, it is impossible to be a true Christian while supporting the murderous acts of Israel and the Jewish leaders.

Before the First World War, a new theology developed endorsing present-day Israel, thinking the Jews are God's 'Chosen People' irrespective of what they do or how they behave. They reason the Jews have a right to rule the world, and every 'Gentile' needs to support the nation of Israel and the Jews of the world, no matter how wicked their international policies are. They claim the Jews already have a covenant with God, making them immune to Christianity.

The Evangelical Christians today are in opposition to the imminent total control of the New World Order, thinking it is evil. But they are in darkness, not knowing that the Jews they support are the force behind the New World Order—a force whose goal is the destruction of all governments, religions, and the common man.

John 4:22 is badly translated and interpreted, causing many false doctrines.

Jesus said to the woman at the well, 'You do not know what you worship: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews' (John 4:22).

It says salvation is of the Jews—and what does it mean?

Firstly, we need to be clear that salvation is not specifically 'for' the Jews, but for all mankind: 'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe' (1 Timothy 4:10). Secondly, salvation is not 'from' the Jews in the sense that they are somehow the source of it. The source of salvation is clear in Scripture: 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men,

whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). 'For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thessalonians 5:9). 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men' (Titus 2:11).

Actually, the Greek word translated 'of' in John 4:22 is 'ek', and it would be better translated 'out of'. It ought to be translated as 'salvation is out of the Jews' or 'salvation is out of Judea'. It is used that way in a number of verses:

'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of (Strong's no. 1537) thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel' (Matthew 2:6). Jesus also came 'out of' (Strong's no. 1537) Egypt: 'And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of (Strong's no. 1537) Egypt have I called my son' (Matthew 2:15). Here is the question: Is salvation through Jesus Christ or is salvation 'of the Jews'?

The word 'Jew' never appears in the original Scriptures. Look in a concordance, and you will discover that the Greek word 'Jew' (Strong's no. 2453) is actually short for the word 'Judean', or more accurately 'Ioudas', pronounced ee-oo-dah-yos. The letter 'J' is not present in the New Testament Greek alphabet. The English alphabet had no 'J' prior to the 14th century, and it was not predominantly used until the 17th century. Since the word 'Jew' is an English concoction that did not exist at the time of the writing of the New Testament, we know that the word is spelled as 'Judean' or 'Judahite'. The King James Bible in 1611, for example, used the word 'Iudea', not our present 'Judea', and it was pronounced you-dee-a. So the word 'Jew' is short for the word 'Judean' or 'Judahite', meaning a resident from a particular area—Judea, the southern part of Canaan. It is where the temple of God stood.

The English word 'Jew' evolved phonetically from the prefix 'Iou', from the Greek word 'Ioudas', which means 'Judean'. Judea is the same as Judah, and Judah was the tribe of Israel that inhabited the southern tip of Israel when the twelve tribes conquered Canaan at about 1400 B. C. The Tribe of Judah was the largest of the twelve and the most influential. God said that the Messiah would come through that tribe.

God is not interested today in our ethnicity, gender, or whether a person is a slave or free. He is 'no respecter of persons'. He is only interested whether we trust Christ as our Saviour or not. Are we a believer in the Only True God, or are we an unbeliever?

The Apostle Paul makes this very clear.

'Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister (servant) of the circumcision (the believers—those who believed in God) for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers (the ancestors of the believers—such as Abraham). And that the heathen ("Gentiles"—nations—unbelievers) might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "For this cause I will confess to Thee among the heathen ("Gentiles"—unbelievers), and sing unto Thy name"' (Romans 15:8–9). 'And when James, Peter, and John, who seemed to be pillars (of the ecclesia—the believers), perceived the grace that was given unto me (Paul), they gave to me and Barnabas the right

hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen (unbelievers), and they unto the circumcision (believers in God—even though many drifted away from God) ' (Galatians 2:9). The 'Judean' people were privileged, having the Word of God, and they were the believers. The study of the Scriptures, particularly the Old Testament, makes it clear that the designation 'Judean' or 'Ioudas' refers to those who were conversant with the God of heaven—those who were believers in God, as opposed to those who had no knowledge of the God of heaven or those who worshipped pagan gods, referred to as the 'Nations'—the unbelievers. Jesus was born in Judea, and He identifies Himself as the 'Saviour of all mankind' (1 Timothy 4:10). The correct translation of John 4:22 is: 'salvation is OUT OF Judea' (John 4:22). Salvation is found ONLY in Jesus, who was born coming from Judea!

Salvation is all about Jesus and not about Israel or the 'Jews!'

• Who are the 'seed' and the heirs of Abraham?

Galatians 3:6–29 tells us clearly that the 'seed (offspring) of Abraham' is Christ – and also His followers. If the present-day 'Jews' accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and quit hanging on to the false idea that the 'Jews' are God's 'chosen people', then they too can become the 'seed' of Abraham. God will bless those who bless the followers of Christ (the true Christians), and curse those who curse the followers of Christ!

• Is Judaism the religion of the Old Testament?

No! Judaism is NOT the religion of the Old Testament. The religion of the Israelites in the Old Testament was the commandments of Moses, but they foreshadowed Christ, and they too had to believe in Him.

'You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life; but they are they which testify of Me!' John 5:39. The only Scriptures that were available when Jesus was on earth were the Old Testament Scriptures, which is what Jesus was clearly referring to. Jesus was stating that the Old Testament Scriptures were about Christ – not about Israel. There are hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament pointing to Christ and His return to earth.

These prophecies were given to the Israelites by God so the Israelites would recognise Jesus when He came to earth. But their leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees, were corrupted, failing to notice Jesus. When He did appear, they not only rejected Him as the Messiah but they accused Him of 'having a devil' (John 8:48) and they murdered Him. The key of the Old Testament is Christ and not Israel.

If we fail to see Christ in the Old Testament, then at best we should not study the Old Testament.

The Apostle Paul says that because of their unbelief in noticing Christ in the Old Testament and the Gospels, God sent them into a strong delusion, so they believed the lie (2 Thess. 2:10–11).

• Here are the words of Jesus Himself to the Jews and their 'spiritual' leaders, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the scribes:

When Jesus walked on earth, the working of Satan was evident and visible in the deeds of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were arrogant and self-righteous and accused Jesus of being a demon-controlled imposter.

Jesus rebuked the leaders for bringing false doctrines into their religious system, encouraging traditions that ‘made the commandments of God of none effect’. ‘Thus you have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition’ (Matt. 15:6). And Jesus said unto them (the Pharisees), ‘Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition’ (Mark 7:9). When Jesus was on earth, He attacked the Pharisees as: hypocrites, blind guides, children of hell, fools, without mercy or faith, full of extortion and self-indulgence, full of uncleanness, serpents, brood of vipers, murderers, crucifiers and scourgers of prophets and wise men, and accused them of being responsible for ‘all the righteous blood shed upon the earth since Abel’ (Matt. 23).

Once they rejected and killed the Messiah, Jesus Christ, they fell into even deeper darkness. In A. D. 70, Jerusalem and the temple in it were destroyed. Many of the Pharisees ended up in Babylon where these abominable oral ‘traditions of the elders’ were committed to writing and became known as the Babylonian Talmud, the ‘holiest’ book of Judaism. This evil undercurrent that had been smouldering for hundreds of years had now taken over completely, and a new occult religion was born – the religion of Judaism.

• Then what does the term ‘Judeo-Christian’ mean?

The authors of Judaism were the Pharisees and the values of Judaism are violently opposed to the values of Christianity. Sadly, it is true, and I will quote a few sayings from their ‘holiest’ book. They detest the Christians. To me, it is an impossible bond. The term ‘Judeo-Christian’ is a farce and an abominable lie. It has been embraced by many ‘Christians’. But how can they call themselves Christians when they are essentially worshipping the followers of Judaism who ridicule, curse and denounce Jesus Christ?• What is the Talmud?

The Talmud is a series of many books that are the ‘holiest’ books in Judaism. Usually there is a paragraph or two of core doctrine (Mishnah), followed by dialogue (Gemara) that expands and interprets the Mishnah. The Mishnah identifies itself within its text as ‘extra-biblical’ law. If it is ‘extra-biblical’, then it is clearly non-biblical. The Gemara is a commentary on the Mishnah. The Talmud is the ‘holiest’ book of Judaism and essentially nullifies the Word of God. Judaism is an occult religion and essentially they ignore the Old Testament.

Judaism did not even exist before Christ. About 100 years after Christ was crucified, Judaism became a new (and occult) religion. Another prominent book in Judaism is the Kabbalah. It is the original source of all sorceries and witchcraft. The Talmud and not the Old Testament is the governing religious book of Judaism. Evidence of this is found in the Talmud itself. There are various quotes in the Talmud.

‘My son, be more careful in the observance of the words of the Scribes (the Talmud) than in the words of the Torah (Old Testament).’ Erubin 21b (Soncino edition).

The Talmud nullifies the Bible by permitting and encouraging virtually everything the Bible defines as sin! While on earth, Jesus made a direct reference to the Talmud when He denounced the Pharisees, the leaders of

the synagogue, for voiding the Scripture by teaching the traditions of men (Mark 7:1–13).
The non-Jews are referred to as goyim, minim, heathen, or Gentiles by the Jews – and are considered to be no better than cattle, according to the Talmud, so their possessions, their land, and even their lives can be taken at will by the Jews. Italian airport security officials at Rome arrested an Israeli Jew for running a human organ harvesting ring from Brazil to South Africa to Israel.
The teachings of the Jewish Babylonian Talmud are arguably the most hate-filled teachings known to man. Keep in mind that they have a 'sanitised' version of the Talmud available to deceive non-Jews. In Judaism, Jewish Rabbis are 'God'.
The Talmud says no rabbi can ever go to hell (Hagigah 27a).
The Talmud spurs the Jews to destroy the New Testament (Shabbat 116a).
Karl Marx (a Jew) said, 'My object in life is to dethrone God and destroy capitalism. '• A new false religion is invented by them and its fundamental doctrines are:
1. The Rabbis are 'God'.
2. The Jewish People are the 'Messiah' – replacing Jesus Christ, because they, their culture, and their religion cannot be criticised.
3. The supposed 'Holocaust' (promoted as the 'Ultimate in Suffering of All Mankind') replaces Calvary.
4. 'Peace on earth' will be established, not by Jesus Christ, but by the Jews slaughtering all the Gentiles, particularly the Christians.
Communism is a Jewish plan straight from the Talmud. Communist Leon Trotsky has said that 'peace' will reign only when there is no more opposition to them – the Jews.
The Jews, true to the Talmud, have been behind every major war and mass murder since the beginning of time. Stalin, Lenin, Hitler – just the more notable ones in our recent history. They even masterminded the Jewish Holocaust via the Nazis for political gain. They wanted their own Zionist state. To them, if you're not a Talmudic Jew, you're not a Jew at all. So sacrificing millions of 'non-Jews' (Jews who worshipped only the Torah) is not wrong. So it's no big secret today that the New World Order is totally twinned with Satanists. They've been around for thousands of years in secret and occult societies, infiltrating, deceiving, and persecuting God's people under the guise of inquisitions, communism, and holocausts. Everything they do can be traced directly back to the Talmud.
Today their policies are known as the Noahide Laws. It sounds innocent but it's not!
Wake up: the Talmudic Noahide Laws are Jewish and it may sound innocent, but in fact they call for the killing of the Gentile people. The colour of your skin will not help you. They insist the Laws of Moses are only meant for the Jewish people, but the Noahide Laws are meant for the Gentiles, but with grave consequences. Did you know it is made legal in the USA Congress! There is much talk of ISIS being funded by Israel and other Zionists and if this is true, it explains the persecution of Christians by these alleged 'Muslims'. The Talmud calls for the killing of even 'the best of the Gentiles' and there are many more disgusting and frightening

verses you may discover if you research the Talmud, the Zohar. They are obsessed with the beheading of the goyim, and it happens to be us!
The Noahide Laws were quietly passed in the USA Congress. Congressman Tom Sawyer (Ohio), Congressman Tom Ridge, Jewish lobbyist and minority leader Bob Michaels and Congressman Benjamin Gillman. These four stayed behind at the end of the day and though there are about 460 people in the House of Representatives, cunningly with only 4 of the 460 people present, they called it a unanimous decision.
Christianity is being heavily Judaized as Israel is acclaimed and the Old Testament rituals and observances are increasingly practised by evangelicals. Talmud-quoting Messianic Jews and false prophets set the standard for millions of evangelicals, inviting them to convert to Talmudic Judaism. Jewish activism is replacing Christianity with the seven Noahide Laws. Although the term 'Noahide Laws' is not widely known today, it is fairly common knowledge among the political and religious power-mongers.
Because the Noahide Laws forbid the free exercise of religion, especially Christianity, and respect one religion over another (Judaism over all other religions), they clearly violate the First Amendment or the 1998 Human Rights Act. Therefore, as long as the powers that be remain in force, they cannot activate the Noahide Laws or enforce them. However, when the constitution is abolished through the declaration of martial law, then the Noahide Laws will be activated and the law enforcers will use their guillotines. The true colours of the New World Order (NWO) with their Jewish adherents will be apparent and their first mission will be to motivate the Noahide Laws. They will round up the Christians who are already known, and demand that they either renounce their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and conform to their Noahide Laws, or be executed with the guillotines.
So follow the bouncing ball: Satanists, Pharisees, Talmud, Illuminati, New World Order, Noahide Laws.
The Pharisees hated Jesus Christ so vehemently, even though they experienced the many miracles He performed in their midst. I understand why Jesus possessed such hatred of the teachings and the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Once we understand that the Pharisees of Jesus' day were involved in a satanic secret society, then we can appreciate why they hated Him so much.
Any secret society that takes oaths to Lucifer and participates in blood rituals, whether sacrifices, drinking, or both, is inside the 'bouncing ball'. Their rituals and black magic are traced from the Talmud. When our Lord was on earth, He sensed all the wickedness that would unfold. It burdened Him greatly, and even the Book of Revelation mentions all the martyrs who will die during the great tribulation. Luckily we may escape the great cull, as we will be swept away to be with our Lord in heaven, but the believers during the great tribulation may die.
Imagine going on a picnic with a group of children. Once you arrive at your ideal spot, there is a get-together and you set down the rules. This may sound bizarre, but soon you will discover the fewer rules you make, the fewer accidents you will have as a group. Say you set a rule to prohibit the

children from climbing up a rock face; then you will soon discover a smart kid who will challenge your authority. Once you turn your back, he will try it and he may injure himself. The fewer rules you set, the less likelihood of an accident. At best the teacher should be part of the children's activities, and he needs to guide and teach them through all the obstacles. Setting rules and turning your back on them is disastrous. If you set one rule, then soon it will be challenged and with time you need to set more rules. That is human nature, as they always seem to find a loophole.

In real life, things become too complex once there are too many laws. It hinders economic growth, burdening individuals, businesses and communities.

I don't think that the people who lived during the time of Christ lived happy lives, as they were burdened by the many laws set by the religious leaders. The Lord sensed it and He freed us from every law. We can go on a picnic and enjoy the freedom of the occasion. Our Lord will guide us personally through the many obstacles in life. Laws have a strange effect on us. It has a snowball effect – initially it commences with one law, and it may seem beneficial, but once it is applied by our flesh, it tumbles down the mountain to become monstrous and dangerous. You commence with one law and soon it fans out to many more, and that is the drudgery of any law-maker.

The snowball effect teaches us to avert man-made traditions. It can be damaging to people by stealing the authority of the Scriptures from their lives. The Pharisees commenced with the Laws of Moses but with time they created the Talmud, in essence a huge snowball with tremendous momentum to kill all of us. Jesus made it clear in Mark 7:13 that the Pharisees were 'invalidating' the word of God for the sake of their own tradition.

'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!' (Mark 7:9). They nullified the laws of Moses to enforce their own interpretation of the law. When their snowball strikes the bottom of the mountain, then save the people who need to absorb its momentum.

In the Book of Romans, the Apostle Paul describes a great frustration. The agony is to discover our sinful flesh, as it seems to refuse to comply or respond to the requirements of God's Law. Those things which we as Christians despise, we find ourselves doing. Those things which we as Christians desire we fail to accomplish. No matter how hard we try, we soon find ourselves yielding to sin. The Apostle Paul describes his frustration in Romans 7:14–25: He desires to serve God, agreeing with the Law of God and rejoicing in it. He wants to do what is right, but his body freezes and will not respond. Sin sends a signal to our bodies, and our fleshly bodies are powerless to resist them. Once we entertain the idea that we are crucified with Christ, and we have a new body inside our fragile body, then only could we master sin. The difference is: do we see ourselves as part of the old, or do we live on earth as part of the new?

During the discourse our Lord had with the Pharisees, He did not answer the question directly, but He lured them into another matter they could not answer. Our Lord must have walked a Sabbath journey. In the Bible it

is supposed to be 2,000 cubits, or less than half a mile, the distance Jewish tradition tells us is allowable to travel on the Sabbath day without violating the law.
Jurisprudence is the study and theory of law and any new law will invite many more questions. Any law is complex and it invites the lawyers or the masters of the law. The complexities of the law are like a game of chess. You weigh up all options before you move your pieces. The more skilful you are, the better you will become. As a lawyer you will soon familiarise yourself with all the loopholes, and somehow they always seem to find a way 'out'. Some chess players are so skilful they can play blindfolded. Similarly, our Lord knew all the complexities of the law and He could not be cornered. Candidly He opened a can of worms, referring to an incident when King David and his servants ate the showbread from the temple on the Sabbath day, and worse, it was meant to be eaten by the priest. The Pharisees could not answer Him.
We can reflect on the history of the man who gathered wood on the Sabbath day (Num. 15:32–36).
It says while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. The people who found him brought him to Moses and Aaron, and the congregation. They put him in custody not knowing what to do with him. The Lord told Moses to stone him to death.
Gathering sticks in itself is not wrong. It could be for the purpose of providing a fire for warmth or cooking. The problem is that a man was deliberately and blatantly gathering sticks in the open on the Sabbath day when God commanded them not to work on the Sabbath. This was a direct challenge to God's authority.
Apparently, that was the first public offence against the newly revealed law of God. It was, essentially, being tested. Therefore, the severity of the punishment was to demonstrate to all of Israel the necessity of obeying the Law of God.
I am sure that was his first game of chess and it proved fatal, as he had no 'lawyers' to defend him. Another practicality is: who will cast the first stone? Jesus faced a mob that was eager to execute a woman caught in adultery. He put a stop to it with a simple challenge: anyone who has no sin in their life should step forward and throw the first stone. That sentence is often cited as a reminder to avoid judging others when there are faults in your own life that need to be addressed (John 8:7). In real life no one can cast any stone. Only Christ can judge us but we are already pardoned, as He acquitted the woman from her sins.

Mark 3:1–6
And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2 And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse Him. 3 And He saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4 And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. 5 And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their

hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

This history happens on the Sabbath, the day we should rest, but on the Sabbath, God will finish His work. The Sabbath denotes the Millennium, and thus the reason why our Lord healed so many people on the Sabbath day. The history of the man with the shrivelled hand has an underlying message of something more momentous.

Repeatedly the Pharisees and the theologians tried to trap our Lord, wanting to fault Him. The previous Sabbath they caught His disciples rubbing the wheat with their hands, and today they must have brought in the man with the shrivelled hand, daring Him to heal him on the Sabbath. In the synagogue our Lord must have read their minds. He was the first to open the can of worms when He told the man to stand up – so the people at the synagogue could notice him. He spoke to them saying, 'Is it right to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath, to heal him or let him die?' They were silent and could not answer Him. Besides, they were powerless to heal anyone, and the anger inside of them did not abate. Instead they agreed to go to King Herod, making plans to kill Him. Our Lord did not fit into their religious mould.

The leaders should have welcomed Him, but the disparity ended with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. They were responsible for His death, and Peter told them to repent on the day of Pentecost, but they refused. Our Lord had no place to hide from His enemies. He was forsaken, and even with His birth, there was no room for Him at the inn (Luke 2:7).

The reason for the hatred is they refused to accept that Christ is the end of the law, preferring to be plastered to the old, to the concept of the synagogue, refusing to let the old go. The old is flavoured by the law and the new is laced by grace.

On the previous Sabbath, the disciples were questioned when they plucked the ears of wheat, but the Lord reminded them that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. Even King David, who is a type of Christ, had the authority to eat on the Sabbath day the showbread in the tabernacle with his men. It proves that 'David', and Christ, is the Lord of the Sabbath. We are part of the grace, and in no way are we entangled with the inferior qualities of the law. The law is a mere shadow of the approaching light, and since we are totally part of the 'light', the shadow will not guide us. During the Old Testament times, the prophets studied the shadow, but since we accepted Christ, all our ties with the law (shadow) ended, proving useless. The Pharisees knew if they accepted Christ, it would spell the end of the synagogue, the Talmud and all their traditions.

Today many Christians are caught in the same snare as the Jewish nation of old. They refuse to believe that all the promises we have are already fulfilled in us, as we are totally part of Christ today. We are a total new creation and the old things are gone, and everything has become new (2 Cor. 5:17). It is time-wasting to chew on the old sins we did. All our promises are fulfilled in the living Christ and He is the end of EVERY human tradition, and we, as our Lord, don't need them. The Pharisees

would have loved to have yoked our Lord to their traditions.
Until John the Baptist, the Law of Moses and the messages of the prophets were preached, but since the resurrection of Christ, and we are totally part of the new and the old is done and dusted (Luke 16:16). The Christians who try to fulfil the laws return to the old principles, choosing to build the kingdom themselves. They do not attempt to be part of the real peace which is only found in Christ. They cast their own bricks, refusing the 'Stone' who is Christ. In this history the Pharisees were proud of their own achievements, deeming Christ's miracles senseless.
Christ, who is the 'end of the law', chose to go to the synagogue, to the very 'heartbeat' of their religion. This healing is one of the seven miracles our Lord did perform on the Sabbath. They regarded the breach of the Sabbath law as a very serious thing. Our Lord made it clear that the Scriptures of the Old Testament never forbade Him in what He was doing, and it was really the traditions of the Pharisees and Scribes that limited Him.
The Hebrew word 'synagogue' can be translated as a 'house of assembly'. For centuries, the synagogue functioned primarily as a place for the Jews to assemble. Originally, people did not attend the synagogue with the sole reason to pray or study the Scriptures. They conducted local business in the synagogue, promoting the general welfare of the Jewish community. At the time of this incident, the synagogue was not a physical structure but a regular gathering of especially the prominent families and community leaders, for social and religious purposes. Since this gathering occurred on the Sabbath, the occasion had a religious and cultural significance. Strict Sabbath-keeping was for many an essential part of their devotion to their tradition and identity.
The man with the withered hand was on the outside of the assembly. Being physically disabled, he would have been poor, non-compliant in religious matters, and morally suspected due to his deformity. In addition, a withered hand symbolised a state of powerlessness as the hand (yad in Hebrew) is a metaphor of strength and action.
When Jesus invited the man to get up and come into the middle of the assembly, He was upsetting the social protocols of the day, disturbing the arrangements of hierarchical power on which they were set. He took the man to the centre of the synagogue, making him the centre of attraction. Before healing the man, Jesus posed the question: 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?' A response was invited and it is equivalent to doing good and preserving life, healing him on the Sabbath, or doing harm and killing him, making him suffer. Jesus exposes the real issue and it is not simply a case of interpreting certain Sabbath regulations and following specific procedures. The impression is they favoured the poor man's disability, thinking it is tied to some secret sin. Their silence speaks volumes, a clear sign of their loyalty to their traditions and Sabbath-keeping, attesting their indifference to the plight of the poor. To them theology and traditions carried the most weight. Jesus' response was both anger and grief. His final verdict and judgement on all the religious church leaders whose prime objective is the traditions of men and the law is spelled out in Luke 1.

‘He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.’ (Luke 1:52–53)
The theologians were more absorbed with issues like who sinned – than addressing the real issue. The suffering of the man having the shrivelled hand did not even cross their mind, confirming they were merciless, having no concern for the ill and the afflicted.
In another history when a blind man was healed (John 9), the Jews were quick to question our Lord saying: ‘Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?’ In other words, what is the cause of his blindness? The man’s sin? Or the parents’ sin? Was he born blind due to his parents’ sin or is it a punishment for his own sin – some kind of inherited punishment while he was in the womb? That was probably not the most compassionate thing to say at that moment. Jesus did not address their false beliefs, but simply stated that neither this man nor his parents sinned. Four times the Jewish rulers ask the man who was healed to denounce Jesus. He was quick to reveal their foolishness, to deny that Jesus was from God. The theologians were ignorant common men, thinking they are the elite of Israel. Yet this beggar, with no formal training, scorns their arrogance and exposes their prejudice against Jesus. Their response was to excommunicate him from the synagogue which also meant he was hated from the Jewish society. They effectively branded the man as the worst of sinners and unfit to be one of them. Their words were harsh and it proves that the law opposes grace totally.
Christ merely spoke the words – ‘Stretch out your hand’ – and he lifted his hand and spread out all his fingers. Luke 6 says the lame hand became like his other hand. In the Bible the hand is the hand of grace or the 5. It is God’s hand of 5. The four fingers denote the law – and the law judges us to death and once we died to the law, then we are freed. Today we must not acquaint ourselves with the law but totally rely on the grace granted to us.
Grace depicts our 5th dispensation and law the 4th dispensation. The purpose of the law is to judge us to death, and the law is written in the 5 books of Moses. If we do study the law carefully, we will find the hand of grace. If any person is subjected to the law, then his hand is shrivelled and there is no life inside of it. It needs God’s grace. Grace is superior to the law, and Abraham was justified by grace and he was acquainted with the principle of grace, living 430 years before the law. The law cannot give us eternal life, only Christ could. We need the knowledge of Christ and the power of His resurrection, and the man with the shrivelled hand experienced this miracle. The man with the lame hand is used to depict the theologians who were obsessed with the law. The law proved powerless, as they overlooked the principle of grace. It is taught by Moses, but they became blind not noticing the grace. Their history ended when they were totally enraged by anger. Many evangelical Christians are obsessed with the law, and they could not discern the hand of grace. In John 5 we read of the dead water at Bethesda, having 5 porches. The dead water depicts the 4 or the law, and it ought to be stirred or made alive, to become a living spring of water. It needs to be part of the 5, to be stirred

by Christ. The 5 porches depict grace.
The hand of grace will eventually rule the synagogues. Yes, the Jewish nations will find the grace – the law will make way for the hand of grace, and the Apostle James wrote about this. He did not address his letter to the 2 tribes of Israel, but he addressed it to the 12 tribes of Israel (James 1:1). In the synagogue grace will be taught during the great tribulation, once Israel repents on the Day of the Lord. The law will be replaced by grace, and the living hand will rule all the nations of the world, commencing with Israel.
The Pharisees plotted to ‘kill’ Him and obviously there is a power struggle. In the Greek language the word ‘kill’ is translated as ‘apolesosin’ (Str. no. 622) which literally means to destroy as one would do to an animal. It is also translated as being lost. They are not lost in the punishment, but rather they lost the way. A Christian can also lose their way, not meaning he is damned, but he will not reap any reward. The Lord threatened the subsistence of the leaders in Jerusalem, and by all means they plotted to kill Him, to secure their existence.
Our Lord sensed their hatred and He chose to go north to the other lost sheep of Israel. To ‘kill’ is to lose all contact with such a person, and not purely to physically kill them.
At the end of the Sabbath, the Rabbis were left standing outside the synagogue, as God will forsake them. For them our Lord was dead, and He left their borders. The multitude (the other sheep) followed Him and they were healed, but He lost contact with the Jewish nations.
We are dead to the law (Romans 6 & 7) but alive to Christ in heaven. Today God is considered dead and it is a widely quoted statement. I believe it’s true as He is not concerned with the plight of our world, and the leaders of the world do mock Him. Things will change once our Lord appears in heaven. David also left Israel and he hid in the caves, accompanied by the poor and the distressed people. The cave is a grave, placed beneath the earth, and to the world, his party of men were reckoned as dead, but he did surface to become king. We as Christ will find no solitude in the synagogue, but we are assured knowing we are guided by God’s hand of grace. We are not reliant on any religion and the law will not rule us. We left this present evil world to be placed with Christ in heaven. We hide safely in the rock who is Christ. The Lord will ensure that the people who do seek Him will find Him.
1 John 3: The world will never understand us, and they will hate us as they hated our Lord.
There is a strange history early in the time of Judah. Then we read of another hand (Gen. 38). In a very unpredictable way, Tamar became Judah’s wife and she had twins. With the delivery of the twins, the one twin put out his hand first and the midwife tied a scarlet thread on it and said, ‘This one came out first.’ The hand retracted and then the other twin, Perez, was born unexpectedly. It was followed by Zerah with the scarlet thread tied on his hand. The hand appeared but it returned to Tamar’s womb, to allow Perez to be born. Today we live in the time of Perez or the 5th dispensation, but once Zerah is born with our Lord’s return, the hand or Israel will reappear. God uses the unusual events of the twins to

establish the importance of the ‘hand’.
Onesimus is a prime example of how a runaway slave did become useful, once he accepted Christ. Onesimus was a slave who, after robbing his master Philemon at Colossae, fled to Rome, where he was converted by the apostle Paul. He sent him back to his master Philemon with the epistle which bears his name. In it he begs Philemon to receive his slave as a ‘faithful and beloved brother’. Paul offers to reimburse Philemon for anything his slave had taken, and to bear the wrong he had done him. In Greek the name Onesimus means to be profitable and helpful. His hand used to be of no use but it was made effective to serve God.
In another rather strange setting, we read of a powerfully yet important story in 1 Kings 13. A mysterious prophet appeared from Judah, who was sent by God. He approached Jeroboam who was standing near the altar, ready to offer a sacrifice, and then the man of God cried saying:
‘O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee. ’
This prophecy foreshadows the future desecration of the altar, and the ebb was when the 10 tribes of Israel disappeared in the Assyrian captivity.

Then the man from Judah also announced a sign, saying the altar will be split open and the ashes on it will fall to the ground.
When Jeroboam heard this he cried out to the man of Judah, saying, ‘Seize him!’ The hand he had extended shrivelled up and he could not draw it back. The altar split open and the ashes fell from the altar to the ground. Jeroboam begged the prophet to restore his hand, and he did.
Moments before this history, Israel was split between the 2 and the 10 tribes of Israel, and the Lord entrusted the 10 tribes of Israel to Jeroboam and Rehoboam had the 2 tribes of Israel known today as the Jewish nation (Judah and Benjamin).
Why did this happen and what is the meaning of this? There has to be a message as the prophet says it was a sign, otherwise this history would have been senseless.
The 10 lost tribes of Israel were steeped in idolatry and the altar will be demolished via Josiah under the name of David. Certainly this history did happen during the time of Josiah, but it happened again while our Lord was on earth. The name Josiah is the Hebrew form of the name Jesus (Greek form). Via the Lord Jesus the idolatry of the 10 lost tribes of Israel will end, and it happened early in the New Testament, as our Lord splintered the Celtic culture that was rampant amongst the 10 lost tribes of Israel.
There were 2 signs and everything happened at once.
When Jeroboam said ‘grab him’; the altar was demolished and then his hand shrivelled, but soon it healed miraculously.
When the hand shrivelled, the 10 lost tribes of Israel were not equipped to serve God, until Josiah appeared. Once the altar is broken down, then they will be equipped to serve God. The altar that is tied to their religious practices will break; and when we accept Christ as our Saviour, then we

abandon all our religious practices. The only religion we do have is to present our bodies to God.
The healing of the hand is the renovation of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, and it happened when our Lord left Judah to preach at Galilee, speaking to the Gentiles or to the 10 tribes of Israel. The salvation went to the heathen nations but we can be more specific: to the lost tribes of Israel. All the miracles and the signs our Lord did with the Apostles is to verify that the heathen nations will be ammi (His people) and the former ammi (Judah or God's people) will become lo-ammi (not My people) (Hosea 1). The tide turned against Judah, but the history of the 10 lost tribes of Israel is different. Early in the history of the Church the Gospel went to all the nations of the world, but wherever the Gospel was accepted and had a footing, there the 10 lost tribes of Israel were. They were steeped in idolatry and the Celtic culture, but things changed for the better. The redemption went to the north-west borders of Europe and this is simple. Mark 3 demands a fresh look, and we query the name of the man with the shrivelled hand. He could be named either Ephraim, Joseph or Jeroboam, as he epitomises the 10 lost tribes of Israel. Jeroboam (10 lost tribes of Israel) will be the first to accept Christ followed by Rehoboam (Jewish nation).
Luke 6:6 says the man's right hand was shrivelled and we may question: where did Jacob place his right hand before he died? He placed it on Ephraim's head, but Joseph told Jacob it was the wrong hand, but he reassured Joseph it was the right one. The Church (Ephraim) will be blessed before the Jewish nations. Not much happened to the firstborn right of Ephraim, but unknown today, we discover it is hidden in the Church today.
Jeroboam spent a long time in Egypt to verify the time when the 10 lost tribes of Israel will spend a long time in the Assyrian captivity. The hand of Jeroboam is healed since they accepted Christ, or since the time of Josiah. The Book of Jeremiah was written while Ephraim was in the Assyrian captivity, and he prophesied in chapter 31 v. 9 that Ephraim will be His firstborn. It says that God heard Ephraim saying, 'You disciplined me severely, like a calf that needs training for the yoke. Turn me again to you and restore me, for you alone are the Lord my God' (Jer. 31:18). The wording is very similar to the words of Luke 15:18 saying: 'I will go home to my father and say, Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you. ' The words to Lazarus were 'stand up', and we cannot help but notice they were the similar words spoken by our Lord when He raised Lazarus.
When the man stood in the middle of the synagogue, he had a dominant position. In the midst we find: the throne of God, the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden, Jerusalem who is the navel of the world (Ezek. 5:5).
Early in the Church's history, Ephraim had a dominant position on earth, but lately I doubt whether Great Britain is the same as of old.
I have a strong suspicion that the early Jews knew who the 10 lost tribes of Israel were, as they tolerated and accepted Christ's message. That may be the reason why they hated the early Christians so badly. The religious leaders were filled with hatred.

Mark 3:7-12
But Jesus withdrew Himself with His disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judaea 8 and from Jerusalem and from Idumaea and from beyond Jordan. And those who dwelt around Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things He did, came unto Him. 9 And He spoke to His disciples that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him. 10 For He had healed many, insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon Him to touch Him. 11 And the unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'Thou art the Son of God.' 12 And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known.
Idumaea are the people living at Edom, and many of them were receptive to the Gospel. Tyre and Sidon are on the borders of Lebanon. Lebanon is also known as Albion, the oldest known name of the island of Great Britain or the white cliffs of Dover. The blessings of the New Testament will not be accepted by the Jewish nations, but it will be accepted by the 10 lost tribes of Israel, wherever they settled.
Our Lord sat in the boat, and it is a picture of the Church. The first boat in the Bible is the boat Noah built and it drifted on the waters or the sea of nations. It headed to a new earth with many promises. There was a great multitude of people and the demons obeyed Him. Many were healed and great numbers accepted Him, and the unclean spirits did verify His real Deity. They were accurate but premature. In the history of Philippi, a demon presented herself as a Christian, who was sent by Satan to pretend to belong to Christ, but she proved to be an imposter. This female soothsayer followed Paul around for many days in the city. Everywhere he went she proclaimed him a man of God who declared 'to us a way of salvation'.
Matthew 12:9–21 also speaks of this history, and then Jesus warned them not to speak to the other people about Him. Then He quoted the Book of Isaiah:
'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon Him; He shall give judgment unto the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He shall not break a bruised reed, nor shall He quench the smoking flax; He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not tire nor faint until He has set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His law.' (Isa. 42:1–4)
Our Lord works in secret and on the quiet. He sits in the heavens and we are sheltered in Him. We are suppressed and not deemed to be the chosen people of the world. They are not particularly bothered about us. If people are healed today, the papers will be filled with them, but our Lord had a different approach and He told His followers to remain quiet. A few people will accept Christ but they will find no solace on earth. It is difficult to believe, but the world refuses the Gospel. The people of today have no real interest in the Bible but they are tolerant, but far from interested. Today God works in the quiet and we are hidden with Christ in heaven. Our

Lord is made known to the world, and He does nothing to the broken reed, and the flax continues to rot and ferment.
Things will only change once our Lord returns.
Flax is mentioned by the prophet Isaiah. The plant yields cotton. During harvest time when the leaves wither and the seeds turn brown, the plant is pulled intact from the ground. The stalks are tied in bundles, and it was left to dry and rot. The woody bark had to decompose and rot, allowing the plant to release the pectin or gum that is attached to the fibre or the stem. The bruised reed is left dangling to the ground and the flax is left rotten, until it yields the cotton. The old earth will rot and God is not concerned, as the world wanted it that way. They said 'Away with Him.' The making of the cotton pictures the agony of death that resulted in Christ's resurrection and Him entering heaven as part of the new covenant. We are already part of it, but not the earth.
Israel who is yoked by the law invites God's intolerance, who detests the 'old principles'. Today they do bear the consequences.
Christ or we do not lift up our voices, nor is His voice heard on the streets. Once our Lord returns, then Israel will be the first nation on earth to accept Him. Then they will be the 'hand' or 'Yad' and that is the meaning of the name Jew. Their future is bright and there will be 144,000 reborn Israelites to spread the message of the Gospel to all the corners of the earth. To the world today the hand of our Lord is pierced, doing nothing for them. It is like the withered fig tree bearing no fruit. Once Israel repents, the hand of God will reappear and miracles will be accomplished. Israel will be a blessing to all the other nations of the world.

Mark 3:13–19
And He went up into a mountain, and called unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. 14 And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16 Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter) ; 17 and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to whom He gave the name Boanerges, which means, The sons of thunder) ; 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him: and they went into an house.
When our Lord went up to the mountains, He elected the 12 disciples. They were specially chosen to be with Him, and the prime objective of the disciples was to preach Him, once He ascended into heaven. Before Christ ascended to heaven, He told His disciples that they would be His witnesses. Indeed they witnessed His life, sufferings, death, and His resurrection. How crucial their task to testify them to an unbelieving world, to face suffering and possible death. When our Lord chose the 12 disciples, He sent them out, giving them the power to perform many miracles, but soon the miracles ended.
In the Gospels and in the Book of Acts, we find four different lists of His disciples. Sometimes they differ in order, but that is not a problem since listing people in a different order still proves that the people were the

same. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each contain a list of 12 disciples. However, Acts has only 11. The reason is Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ, had died and he was not listed.

Judas was a disputed disciple and his name is tied to the name ‘Judah’ (Str. no. 2455) embodying the feelings and the rejection ‘Judah’ had towards their Messiah. In the Gospel, Judas represents the Jewish nation, personifying the statement of John: ‘He came unto His own, and His own received Him not’ (John 1:11). Judas betrayed Jesus and his attitude reflects the disbelief of the ‘Jewish nation’. His gruesome death portrays the deportation of the unbelieving Jewish nations into the Egyptian captivity, in the year A. D. 68. The Apostle Peter says that the death of Judas portrays the Jewish nations as it is prophesied in the book of Psalms: ‘Let his habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in it: and let another take his office’ (Acts 1:20; Ps. 69:25; 109:8). The other disciple to be chosen to ‘take the office of Judas’ does reflect the Church.

Thomas too represents the Jewish nations. It took him seven days before he believed that Christ resurrected from the dead. He wanted to see and probe the wounds of Christ before accepting Him as Saviour. The Jewish nations will accept Christ after the great tribulation, and the Jewish nations with the 10 lost tribes of Israel will become the foremost nation on earth. Thus we again find the familiar equation of 2:10 as the 2 represent the Jewish nations and the 10, the 10 lost tribes of Israel, who did respond positively to the invitation of Christ. Acts 1:21–26 tells how they replaced Judas with Matthias thus retaining the 12 disciples.

The main difference is in the name: summary of the names is Thaddaeus (Matt. 10:2–4; Mark 3:13–19) and Judas the son of James (Luke 6:12–16; Acts 1:13–14). Thaddaeus and Judas the son of James is the same person. After all, Judas the son of James would have been sharing the name of Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ. It is highly probable that he preferred to be called Thaddaeus. It is common in Scripture to demonstrate people’s alternate names. Take for example Acts 1:23 where we see that someone named Joseph is also called Barsabbas and Justus. Joseph was not the chosen disciple to replace Judas Iscariot, but the mere mentioning of his name needs to remind us of Joseph who had the firstborn right, and today that firstborn right is relished in the Church.

Amongst the disciples were James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. To them He gave the name Boanerges, which means the sons of thunder (3:17). This is the only place in Scripture that mentions Him as the sons of thunder, and there is no explanation why He did this. He must have had a good reason for dubbing James and John as the sons of thunder as Jesus knew all men (John 2:24–25). He knew their nature. On one occasion when Jesus and His disciples were travelling through Samaria going to Jerusalem, they ran into trouble. Jesus attempted to find accommodations for the night but they were met with opposition from the villagers, simply because His destination was Jerusalem—a result of Jew-Samaritan prejudice. When James and John saw this, they asked, ‘Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?’ (Luke 9:54). Jesus rebuked the brothers, and they all went to another village. James and John’s response to the Samaritans was indeed thunderous. James and

John were two of Jesus' closest friends, being two of the 'inner three' disciples (Matt. 17:1). John's epistles, written late in his life, hint that he still possessed a fervent spirit, especially in his reproving the apostates and deceivers (1 John 2:22; 2 John 7; 3 John 10). However, it is tempered by love. In fact, in the First Epistle of John, the word 'love' and its comparative form occurs more than 40 times. With time the 'son of thunder' earned a new nickname: the 'apostle of love'.
The number 12 appears 187 times in the Bible, and lots of history is tied to it. There were 12 sons of Jacob and those 12 sons formed the 12 tribes of Israel. The number 12 is displayed in many other settings, such as the 12 months of the year and the 12 constellations of the zodiac. The stars pass through the 12 signs of the zodiac in their heavenly procession. It represents authority and completeness. The number 144,000 servants of God is the sum of 12 x 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. The dimensions and description given of the New Jerusalem in the Bible's Book of Revelation 21:12–14 have multiples of the number 12. The wall of the city has 12 foundations and is named after the 12 apostles. According to the Bible any settlement is called a city once it is secured by a solid wall. Basically, it is to protect the city at night, and the rulers who sit at its gates will decide who can enter or leave the gates. At the gates, the leaders exercised their power, and one example is Ruth's destiny which was determined at the city gate (Ruth 3:11; 4:1, 10–11). Similarly the Lord will protect the entrances and the exits. There were 12 angels at the gates, and they were named after the tribes of Israel (Ezek. 48:31–35). Many Christians today have the illusion that the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven like a prefabricated city, to finally alight on earth. I don't believe this, and constantly we are reminded that the Book of Revelation is packed with visions and symbolism. What else could it be besides the Church?
Also, in Ephesians 2:19–22, the Church is symbolically referred to as being 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone'.
Compare that to Revelation 21:'And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb' (vv. 12–14). We can also compare Revelation 21 with 1 Peter 2:'And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal' (Rev. 21:10–11). 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, and precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded' (1

Pet. 2:3–6). This describes Jesus as a precious living stone who is the chief cornerstone of a spiritual house, made up of ‘lively stones’, which refers to those who believe in Him. It seems to me that it is vividly symbolised in Rev. 21:10–11. The Apostle Paul says we are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone (Eph. 2:20). The foundation is solidly anchored on the earth, and symbolically it is the grave of our Lord. His work emanated from the grave upon His resurrection, and the walls of the foundations are firmly secured. The essence of the new creation is the Risen Christ, and our foundation is already firmly rooted in Him. Unlike Israel, we will never need to enter its gates; as we are its gates. The 12 foundations relate to the 12 apostles. What can be clearer than the following words in the Book of Hebrews: ‘But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem: and to an innumerable company of angels’ (Heb. 12:22).

Mark 3:20–27 A Divided House
Then Jesus went home. Another crowd gathered so that Jesus and His disciples could not even eat. 21 And when His friends and family heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself. 22 But the scribes which had come down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils. 23 And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27 No man can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.
This is a fresh view of Jesus, when He went home. We can ask where His real home was and if He had any solitude there. He had no time to prepare any food, and there were no ‘fast-foods’. Our Lord had the correct perspective when He weighed the importance of our eternal heavenly treasure to our meagre earthly subsistence. We seem to forget why we are born on earth today. Our short existence is like a stepping stone to our eternal redemption. Only one step to Jesus. The Lord Jesus had a true perspective of life and the believing crowds of people did exhort Him. It made Him not to worry about His own personal wellbeing, and His own family members thought He was going out of His mind. Now, you might be wondering how this verse will encourage us? Once we accept Christ as our Saviour, then somehow we may relate to the attitude of our unbelieving family members and friends. Maybe we experienced similar strained relationships, or even rejection from relatives who think we lost our mind because of our faith. Perhaps, like Jesus, our service to God draws us into a crowd disfavoured by our family members, making them feel uncomfortable. Be encouraged by the fact that Jesus faced the same earthly challenges.

Our Lord was in turmoil, and the religious leaders were quick to judge His impulsive behaviour, saying He is demon possessed. They thought He was in a trance.
His family noticed this and they thought the best is to restrain Him, thinking He lost His true perspective of life. Our Lord must have fasted, not worrying about food.
It is remarkable to notice how the Pharisees reacted to this incredible miracle by Jesus, in a very opposite way to the multitude, who realised that Jesus was from God. In fact, it was an admission by the Pharisees that Jesus worked miracles or performed deeds beyond the reach of any unaided human power, but they attributed this power to Beelzebub instead of God. Actually, they should have known better: the devil cannot do works of pure goodness. However, their self-absorbed pride made the Pharisees realise this. If the teachings of Jesus prevailed among the people, their influence and control over the crowds of people would end. So, the miracles they did not deny, but instead attributed it to 'Beelzebub the prince of the demons'.
Beelzebub is possibly an alteration of Baalzebub, meaning the 'lord of the flies', the Baal worshipped by the Philistines at Ekron (2 Kings 1:2–3). Alternatively the other possible rendering could be the lord of the lofty abode (habitation).
'Beelzebub' is a title of Satan, hailing him as the prince, or ruler, of the demons. The religious leaders blasphemously accused Jesus Christ of expelling the demons by means of Beelzebub.
Demons are mere idols. They used to live in the golden era, dating from the old world and they harbour memories from that time. The Apostle Paul explains why we as Christians need to flout all idol worship and the knowledge of demons. At best we need to totally ignore them, deeming them as if they never existed. The Greek people were steeped in them and they had many different names as Zeus and Jupiter. They worshipped the demons or the lesser gods, thinking they would avert future difficulties. They sculptured demons, which are idols, and worshipped them. This explains why Paul uses the words 'demon' and 'idol' almost interchangeably in his Letters: the Scripture says: 'But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. . . But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake' (1 Cor. 10:20, 28).
The best advice is to pay no attention to them, not to meddle with them, and then they will not bother us. When you give someone the silent treatment you are causing that person physical pain. Simply by ignoring someone else's existence you can inflict pain on them. That is the best tactic when we deal with demons. To even try to expel them gives them clout and unnecessary attention. That is why the ever popular 'time out' with a child is so effective. The child feels ostracised, feeling pain even though no physical pain was inflicted on them.
So idols and demons are effectively the same. Notice how Paul says they sacrificed 'to demons (idols) and not to God' – the demons are not gods, and as there is only one God, thus the demons are powerless. The Apostle

Paul clears this issue saying: ‘As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one’ (1 Cor. 8:4). An idol, or a demon, has no existence at all. They have no body but are parasites or opportunists. They remember the ‘golden era’ before Adam was created, and they are knowledgeable, but wicked. In Genesis 1:2 we read of the previous creation that existed before Adam, but the people were punished in a great deluge, and they died losing their body; but their spirits are not dormant. The spirits are awake and they are the ‘demons’ or the devils our Lord was talking about, keen to possess people or even animals.

The Apostle Paul challenges the Galatians saying you who were enslaved to those who were not really gods. . . How can you turn back again to those weak and beggarly elements, whose slaves you want to be once more? (Gal. 4:8–9)

Further proof that people in New Testament times believed demons to be idols or ‘gods’ is found in Acts 17:16–18. Then the Apostle Paul preached at Athens, which was a ‘city given over to idols’, therefore worshipping many different idols. After hearing Paul preach the Gospel, the people said:

‘What will this babbler say?. . . He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods (demons) : because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection’ (vv. 18–19).

So the people thought that Jesus and the resurrection were new demons or idols that were being explained to them. Paul goes on to teach the truth to these people, and in v. 22 he says: ‘Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious’ (literally: devoted to demon worship). He explains how God is not present in their demons or idols. Remember that God is the only source of power. If He is not in demons, then demons do not have any power because there is no other source of power in this universe. The Old Testament is filled with many examples and the Bible predicted that mental disease would be one of the punishments for worshipping other gods/demons (Deut. 28:14–28, 59–61). This explains the association of demons with mental illness in the New Testament. It infuriates God when His people believe in demons (Deut. 32:15–24). They are the lowest in the hierarchy of Satan, and await God’s punishment on the day of Judgement. Angels cannot possess us but the demons who have no body can. If the demon leaves any person to possess another person, then we call it reincarnation. It is the reincarnation; they are the traits of the demon that used to live inside another person. That simple! When demons are cast out, people’s personality improves and sometimes diseases leave them. At times demons have taken over the features and voices of people. In fact, today we are encouraged to seek the wisdom of the ‘spiritual guides’ and it’s nothing more than demons masquerading, seeking the help of the departed spirits. These lying spirits promote the doctrine of reincarnation.

The Lord rebuked the religious leaders and His rebuke is summarised in a series of parables, and they are recited in Matthew 13, corresponding to Mark 3 & 4.

Our Lord says if the devils cast out devils – then the ‘house of the devil’ will not last. If Satan is against itself, then things will go from bad to worse. The power of our Lord succeeds the power of Satan, and therefore our Lord proved to be more powerful than the demons or Satan.

Mark 3:27-30 The Unpardonable Sin
Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 29 but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30 because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.
To define this verse we need to know what sin is and who the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is the resurrected Christ the unseen, who is now working in us.
Mark 3 corresponds to Matthew 12, and Matthew says whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come (Matt. 12:31–32). The Son of Man is Jesus of Nazareth and He is part of the old, but the resurrected Christ is different, as He is totally part of the new creation. Some of the people who cried ‘Crucify Him’ were the same people who were born again on the day of Pentecost.
The Apostle John writes of a sin leading to death.
‘If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it’ (1 John 5:16).
The demons love to teach us once we committed the unpardonable sin, we are past redemption. I believe while we are on earth there is hope and we can repent. Many people fear they have committed some sort of sin, and God will refuse them any forgiveness. They feel trapped no matter what they do. Satan loves to keep us in this frame of mind, making us toil under this misconception. To refuse the resurrected Christ is the unforgivable sin. Our Lord paid the price of all our sins; believer or non-believer; but we cannot expect Him to pay the penalty of sin by refusing Him, or having the attitude of the religious leaders saying, He is of the devil. They will pay the price and that is the reason why He mentioned the sin against the Holy Spirit.
Now we need to deal with the big question of sin, and the easiest is to study the words Satan once spoke to Eve: Satan told Eve, ‘Did God really say, “You must never eat the fruit of any tree in the garden”’, making her doubt. Sin is unbelief, not believing what God said.
Whether or not we believe in Christ Jesus is defined by a choice we make, and the Scriptures are clear about this: Moses said to Israel I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live (Deut. 30:19). Nowhere in the scriptures are we ever commanded to believe in Jesus! If you do not believe in Jesus that is your choice. You choose life by believing in Jesus or choose death by not believing in Jesus. You have the freedom to choose whether or not you accept or reject Christ. The people who accept Christ will inherit eternal

life. Those choosing to reject Him will die the second death and that will be the end of them forever. Not believing in the resurrected Christ is not a sin but a choice we made willingly. There is only one unpardonable sin and it is clearly stated in the Scriptures.

Absolutely no sin was pardonable under the Old Testament covenant. The wages of any sin is death. Under the New Testament covenant, all sin is pardonable with the exception of one! That one unpardonable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost:

Blasphemy is defined as a crime by assuming that we have the rights or the qualities of God. The people who cursed the Lord Jesus on earth can be forgiven, but not those who wilfully sin against the Holy Spirit. What is the difference between the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus? The Holy Spirit or the Comforter is the resurrected Christ, and once Christ ascended into heaven, then the Comforter or the Holy Spirit lives inside a reborn Christian. The resurrected Christ spoke to His disciples and told them to remain in Jerusalem, asking them to wait for the promise of the Father, saying they will be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:4–5). ‘Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you’ (John 16:7). When our Lord hung on the cross, He prayed: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34). He died for every sin on earth, and the question of sin is dealt with, but what remains is our willingness to accept Him. If we forfeit our chances, then our mortal bodies will die and cease to exist once it turns to ashes.

Assuming we have the qualities of God is exactly what Satan did when he rebelled against God. He attempted to usurp God’s authority. It is also the sin Satan wants us to commit by believing the lie; ‘Ye shall not surely die’ (Gen. 3:4), he told Eve and the world continues to believe the lie. By believing this lie, we assume we are eternal as God. Thus if any person today claims to have an immortal soul, apart from Christ, then he tries to assign to himself the eternal life qualities of God.

When our Lord walked on earth, He told someone, ‘Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.’ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?’ (Luke 5:20–21). Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?’ The Jews answered him, saying, ‘For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God’ (John 10:31–33). So Jesus was accused of blasphemy which is defined as a man assuming the qualities of God. Since all men are mortal beings, when they assume the godly characteristic of eternal life, they commit blasphemy. Anyone who dares to punish others with eternal torture in hell simply for not believing in him obviously is very angry, bitter, and hateful. Those characteristics do not apply to God. God is love. Therefore, God did not create such a system —man did! Man created the immortal soul myth and its associated punishment under Satan’s influence. If you believe God created a system whereby billions of people will suffer in hell eternally, you belittle God by

assigning to Him human qualities! Let us consider why the only unforgivable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and placed angels on the earth as caretakers under supervision of the archangel Satan. However, Satan wanted more power. He wanted to be like the most High God:
'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High' (Isa. 14:12–14).
Not satisfied being an archangel, Satan desired to be like the most High God. So he rebelled and attempted to seize the power and authority of God. Satan thus committed blasphemy. God then created man a little lower than the angels during the Genesis recreation of the earth. Man is mortal but we can become immortal and equal to Christ once we are re-born. Once we are born again, we attain a spiritual body to become immortal to live forever. In the ages to come, we will seize the responsibility and the duties of the rebellious angels and Satan himself. Only those believing in Jesus will gain eternal life. A person who believes in himself shunning Christ will never qualify to inherit eternal life (John 3:16). Meek, humble humans are blessed with eternal life, not holier-than-thou blasphemers. The meek shall inherit the earth and not the man-made holier-than-thou, power-grabbing people!
'But the meek shall inherit the earth' (Ps. 37:11). 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth' (Matt. 5:5). In the new creation, there will be no hint or any trace of Satan. Everything will become new, to be totally part of the new.

Mark 3:31–35
Jesus' Mother and Brothers
There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. 32 And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. 33 And He answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? 34 And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.
The people told Him His parents and family are waiting outside to see Him.
He responded waving with His hand over the crowds of people, saying the people who listened to Him and obey His words are His real family. They are the ones who believed in the 'One' who is sent by God. The desire of God is that the people need to believe in Christ.
We need to question which house our Lord was referring to. Was it the house of Judah, His family (brothers and sisters), the crowds who believed in Him? To which house did He belong?
Clearly the Lord associated Himself with those who believed Him.
Soon afterwards our Lord left the house and He went to the sea, sitting in a boat facing the crowds of people on the land. When the Lord Jesus preached He left the world and sat in a boat on the seashore. Anyone

familiar with typology knows the sea pictures the sea of nations, and the land is Israel. Many people enjoy fishing, and they can spend hours fishing while turning their back to the world, forgetting all the bad experiences in life. We as the Church are in a boat, absorbing the waves of a world in turmoil, but we are assured we will reach the other side safely. It was like the Apostle Paul who was caught in a storm steering towards Malta (Acts 28). It pictures our relationship to this world. Our Lord faced the real believers who were receptive to His Words.

When our Lord spoke to them in Matthew 13, He went to the synagogue, and He met great opposition.

‘And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? 55 Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? 57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. 58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief’ (vv. 54–58).

This no ordinary saying, as it reveals the real abode of our Lord.

The first question they asked is where he got all his wisdom? They never said He was always with them. He was not in any of their prestigious schools, and we do know his brothers and sisters but where did he get this wisdom from? Slowly we need to accept there is a possibility that He was not always with them. Why did our Lord mention this verse?

They said we know His family but they did not know the real source of His wisdom. They had no explanation. Certainly He did not get the wisdom from them. The Lord told them a prophet is not revered in his own land, so where is he revered, outside Judah from a different culture? Where did He go?

When we study Luke 4:24–27, we may get an idea.

‘But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26 but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian’ (vv. 25–27).

When the religious leaders heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious or beside themselves. For a reason they wanted to throw our Lord down a cliff. Why were they so furious? The reason is He said He got His wisdom from the land of Sidon or Lebanon, and even from Syria. That is where the 10 lost tribes of Israel were seated.

We need to take a fresh look at the early history of our Lord. The last New Testament account of the boy Jesus is found in Luke:

‘And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man’ (Luke 2:52).

Then, eighteen years passed during which time the Scriptures are absolutely silent concerning the whereabouts and activities of the Lord Jesus. It has been the popular teaching for centuries that He lived in the

village of Nazareth, Galilee, working as a carpenter until He took up His Galilean Ministry at the age of 30. Although the Gospels offer no record of these so-called silent years, they do contain several distinct implications that these eighteen years were not spent in Palestine. Consider the following passage:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. . . And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. . . And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? (Luke 4:16–22)

I believe that early in Jesus' life He may have spent it elsewhere. Maybe I am wrong, but it will explain many Scriptures. In this passage His hearers ask the question, Is not this Joseph's son? Almost as though they were in doubt as to His true identity. As we have seen in Matthew 13:55–56 Jesus was such a stranger to the people of Nazareth that they could not refer to Him by name, but only by His relationship to the other members of His family whose identity was not in doubt. In fact, the people of Jesus' home town wanted to kill Him: the Jewish nations did not accept Him, and He felt like an outcast, but somewhere there was an enclave of people who gladly accepted His words (Luke 4:16–29).

We know that Jesus spent much of His time ministering in Capernaum. Have you not wondered why John the Baptist didn't recognise Jesus at first? When Jesus appears upon the banks of the Jordan River where John was baptising (John 1:28), he scarcely recognised Jesus, even though they were first cousins (Luke 1:36). They must have known each other during their early childhood.

He even sent his disciples to question Jesus if He was the one that John was expecting to come. Finally, John recognises who the stranger is and exclaims: 'Behold the Lamb of God!' John the Baptist appeared puzzled as to His identity.

Even when Jesus spoke in the synagogue, people asked if he wasn't the son of Joseph the carpenter. If he had lived with the very same people during his teens and twenties they would have immediately known for sure who He was.

With our Lord's crucifixion, the Sanhedrin declared Jesus a criminal, and according to both the Roman and Jewish law, the body of an executed criminal had to be claimed immediately by the next of kin, or else the body of the victim was cast into a common pit, where, as with others, all physical record of them would then be completely wiped out. Joseph of Arimathea, evidently, was the next of kin and the Pharisees dared not oppose him. His influence was great and it stretched beyond the borders of Judea into the highest places of Roman authority.

Strangely, the Bible has nothing more to say about Joseph of Arimathea following the Crucifixion of Christ. Surely this man who was a disciple of Christ, who had shown rare courage in begging the body of Jesus, would have become a close follower of Christ after the transforming experience at Pentecost. Although the Bible never mentions him again, we are not left in the dark concerning the dominant role Joseph played in the spreading of Christianity. Joseph became the Apostle of Britain, who with some disciples of Christ, and Mary the mother of Jesus, established Christianity in the

Isles of Britain. Perhaps another clue can be found in the beautiful poem by William Blake (1757–1827).

The Glastonbury Hymn

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?
Bring me my Bow of burning gold;
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!
I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green & pleasant Land.

Generally, it is known that Joseph died early when Jesus was just young. It then came upon the next of kin to support Mary and her family. Joseph of Arimathea was wealthy, and I have no difficulty believing that Joseph took Jesus on many of his trips. He also took Mary on some of the trips. Joseph was a dealer in metals and other goods. He is known to have taken many trips to Britain to obtain these metals. You may ask, as some have, why Jesus chose Britain to live in. There are several reasons. First, there were plentiful fish and game, and the soil was fertile for growing food. There was enough water from the spring, known as Chalice Well. It is the notorious Jesus' Well. One story has it that the Holy Grail used by Jesus at the Last Supper was taken to the well by Joseph and buried next to it. There are many stories of the healing powers of the water from the well. Stories also have it that Jesus and Mary came to live in the home that Jesus had built with his own hands. This Isle of Avalon has been sacred for centuries. Even King Arthur is said to be buried there. Another reason why Jesus chose this island to live is that it was totally free from any Roman dictatorship.

Mark 4:1–20

And he began again to teach by the seaside, and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship and sat in the sea, and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables and said unto them in his doctrine, "Hearken; Behold, the sower went out to sow; and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth; but when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground and did yield fruit that

sprang up and increased and brought forth: some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred.” And he said unto them, “He that has ears to hear, let him hear. ”
And when he was alone, those that were close to him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto those that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” And he said unto them, “Know ye not this parable? How then will ye understand all the parables? The sower is he who sows the word. And these are those by the wayside, in whom the word is sown, but when they have heard, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. And likewise these are those who are sown on stony ground, who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness but have no root in themselves and are temporal; afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended. And these are those who are sown among thorns, such as hear the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And these are those who are sown in good ground, such as hear the word and receive it and bring forth fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”
We need to get a clear picture of our Lord with His disciples on the boat, as it portrays something meaningful. The people on the land who listened to the Lord speaking from the ship resemble Israel. In the Old Testament, the land pictures Israel, and we are familiar with the two beasts in Revelation 13: the beast arising from the sea resembles one coming from the heathen nations, and the other beast from the land is the false prophet who comes from Israel. The beast from the sea derives from the Gentile nations, and the beast rising from the land derives from Israel. The boat drifted on the water, which pictures the Church drifting on the sea of nations. The gigantic waves in a storm picture the impulsive behaviour of all the nations of the world or the unbelievers. The boat pictures the Church, and Christ is the head of the Church. It floats above the sea of nations, and the Lord will steer us safely to the other side. It is like the Apostle

Paul who steered the boat safely to Malta, and no one on board was injured (Acts 28). We are at Galilee in a boat with our Lord, tossed by the water (heathen nations), and we face the Jewish nations who live on land. Our Lord spoke in parables to explain the mystery of our time, and the disciples could ‘piece them’ together once Christ was resurrected from the dead. To us, the parables are easy to understand, but the disciples had to wait a few months to really grasp them. The world that refuses Christ will never grasp them. Our Lord said, “I speak in parables so they won’t

understand.” Then why would Jesus do that?
• “All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke He not unto them.” (Matt. 13:34)
• “But without a parable spoke He not unto them…” (Mark 4:34)
• “This parable spoke Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which He spoke unto them.” (Jn. 10:6)
Many Christians believe that Jesus taught in parables to make His message clear, but that is not biblical. Even His disciples were in the dark, and they did not understand. Repeatedly, they asked Jesus to explain the parables to them. When Jesus was alone with His disciples, He told them they would finally grasp the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the unbelieving crowds, He would speak in parables. They see and hear Him—but they do not understand. With the parables, Jesus didn’t want the sceptics to understand, and He didn’t want to convert them. Why would Jesus do that?
Jesus gives the answer Himself:
“And the disciples came, and said unto Him, ‘Why do you speak unto them in parables?’ He answered and said unto them, ‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given. ’” (Matt. 13:10–11)
“…but unto them it is not given.” Jesus spoke in parables that the majority of the people could not understand! Even Jesus’ own disciples had to have these parables explained to them. But He often did that by telling them another parable! Why would Jesus do that?
Because God’s plan involves calling many, but choosing only a few—at least in this age.
“Many [meaning—all] are called, but few are chosen.” (Matt. 22:14)
Jesus said, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” (Jn. 15:16)
The shocking truth is that Jesus hid the meaning of His teachings from the masses. The word “parable” (parabole, Strong’s no. 3850) means a similitude that transmits a moral truth. The best way to visualise it is two train rails—if you see the one rail, you can easily picture the other. The idea is that the one rail is tangible, but the other rail running parallel to the first conveys the spiritual. The one ‘rail’ is the sower sowing his seed, and the spiritual significance is that only a very few seeds will sprout to bear fruit for all eternity. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus taught His own disciples in private and told them:
“These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time comes when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.” (Jn. 16:25)
By Jesus’ own acknowledgement, He didn’t teach or speak to even His own apostles ‘plainly.’ But He promised that the time would come when He would no longer speak in proverbs but would speak plainly. The people did not understand Jesus’ parables; the Scribes and Pharisees did not understand Jesus’ parables—except on one occasion they ‘perceived’ He was speaking of them—and not even the Apostles understood Jesus’ parables.
Over and over, the Apostles did not understand.
• “And He (Jesus) said unto them (His disciples), ‘How is it that ye do not

understand?’” (Mark 8:21)
• “But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.” (Mark 9:32)
• Jesus said unto His disciples: “‘Let these sayings sink down into your ears…’ But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, and they perceived it not; and they feared to ask Him of that saying.” (Luke 9:44–45)
• “These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified (after His resurrection), then they remembered that these things were written of Him.” (Jn. 12:16)
Jesus taught His disciples for three and a half years. They heard Him preach, and He taught them hundreds of times, yet they did not understand.
“Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, ‘Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished…’ and they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.” (Luke 18:31–34) It is clear the disciples understood nothing concerning the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But at the last meeting Jesus had with His apostles after His resurrection, we read:
“And He said unto them, ‘These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you (the things they never understood), that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me (meaning the entire Old Testament Scriptures).’ Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:44–45) Why did Jesus finally decide to open the eyes and minds of the disciples so they could understand?
• “Then the disciples came and said unto him, ‘Why dost thou speak unto them in parables?’ He answered and said unto them, ‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens (but not at this specific time, but eventually—after His resurrection), but to them it is not given. For whosoever has, to him shall be given (more), and he shall have in abundance; but whosoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that which he has. Therefore I speak to them in parables: because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them (and in all future generations down through the centuries, except for a very small chosen few) is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9–10, which says, “By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive; for this people’s heart (those in Isaiah’s day, those in Christ’s day, and through the generations into today) is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart and should be converted, and I should heal (save) them. ’” (Matt. 13:10–15) There could be no better description of the organised Church of today!
“The people draw near unto Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips: but their heart is far from Me. But in vain (pointlessly) they do

worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (hell fire, immortality of the soul, belief in three separate or distinct persons in one God, infant baptism, and many more false doctrines of men).” (Matt. 15:8–9)

But to the chosen few, Jesus said:

“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men (all the Patriarchs of the Old Testament) have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.” (Matt. 13:16–17) After Jesus’ death and resurrection, He enabled them to understand His sayings and parables by breathing His resurrected Spirit on them, so they could understand the spiritual things—even the things the patriarchs of old, including the prophets themselves, did not understand. Some did not understand their own prophecies. An example is Daniel once he is given a vision. He was told:

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end…” (Dan. 12:4)

But all these prophecies are being revealed to us at a critical time before the rapture. We accept God’s Word and are willing to diligently search the Scriptures.

“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow. ”

• “These things happened to them (Old Testament Patriarchs) as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. It is for our admonition.” (1 Cor. 10:11)

• “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who predicted the grace that would come to you searched and investigated carefully. They probed into what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating when he testified beforehand about the sufferings appointed for Christ and his subsequent glory. They were shown that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things now announced to you through those who proclaimed the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things angels long to catch a glimpse of.” (1 Pet. 1:10–13)

This may be the reason why the theologians, pastors, Bible scholars, and translators don’t really understand the Scriptures. The organised Church is ‘teaching the commandments of men, and not the wholesome Word of God.’ That is why Jesus said, “They draw near to Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.” (Matt. 15:8) If we are sincere and do accept God’s Word in simple faith with no ‘ifs’, then God will open our minds and hearts to understand the spiritual truths. If we are born again, then the Holy Spirit will reside inside of us to open our eyes. Until that time, they will interpret the Bible literally and rely on their own senses. They are ‘soulish’ or ‘natural. ’

“The natural man (the soulish man—one who relies on their senses) receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto

him: neither can he know them, because spiritual things are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14) Understanding the Scriptures is not related to our intelligence, advanced religious credentials, or the amount of years studying at the seminary. One can only understand the Scriptures when our heart, eyes, and mind are opened to the truth, and it is realised by Christ’s Spirit inside of us. When did our Lord speak to them in parables? This is an interesting point—almost all of His parables were taught during the last year of His three-year ministry. Most are in the latter half of that year, and many are from the last week of His life. They seem to have increased in frequency as the opposition to Christ became more intense. We believe there is a connection between the timing of the parables to allow a somewhat firmer ground to answer the question in Matthew 13:10–13. His purpose is to ‘drive off’ the unending flow of critics, the curiosity seekers, and the people who had no real interest in Him. Satan has his own agenda. Everything he does is a counterfeit of Christ. Even Satan’s followers on earth, the elite or the Illuminati, do worship Satan, and he has a hidden agenda. They deliberately deceive us, and everything we see on earth today is about to tumble. Your faith in your prescription drugs, money, property, and investments will prove useless. A mild version is spelled out in their hidden agenda, known as the Georgia Guidestones. The hierarchy of the Illuminati speaks in code so the general population cannot understand their objectives—to rule the world and destroy the vast majority of the population of the world. The goal of the political leaders is total destruction, whereas God’s goal is Universal Restoration—and luckily the old creation will end with the Millennium. He who laughs last, laughs the best. Christ has the final say, and not Satan.
Mark 4 commences with the Parable of the Sower. The parable is found in the three Gospels: Matt. 13:3–9; Mark 4:3–8; Luke 8:5–8. While it is not the longest of Jesus’ parables, it is the one for which He gave the most detailed explanation. It was also this parable that prompted the apostles to ask, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” Another valid reason why our Lord spoke in parables comes to my mind. When our Lord lived on earth, the Jewish nation had no excuse to reject Him, as all the prophecies were fulfilled in Him, even though many of them were forcefully done. An example is Isaiah 6:9, which says that their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes are closed lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart to be converted.
They were stiff-necked. Imagine if any Bible student had to approach the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, saying that our Lord cannot return shortly—say, after the day of Pentecost—maintaining many prophecies are not fulfilled. Isaiah 6:9 was one of them. When Peter addressed the Jewish council, he urged them to accept Christ. If they did, then the Jewish nation would have continued living in the land, avoiding the humiliation of being deported into Egyptian exile. They would have entered the promises of the Millennium. Peter told them that all the prophecies were fulfilled, and they had no excuse not to acknowledge Him. Any student of that time would have agreed. We read: “Whom heaven indeed must receive till the times of the restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the

mouth of his holy prophets since time began.” (Acts 3:21) All the words spoken by the prophets were then fulfilled. However, many prophecies were fulfilled hastily, and the Jewish nation had no excuse to reject Him. We discover an often-quoted phrase in the Gospel of John, saying “that the Scriptures or His Word may be fulfilled.” It is found nine times in this Book alone. They are mostly the sayings of the Lord around His crucifixion. Another example of a forceful fulfilment is the speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost, as shortly afterwards it was deemed unnecessary by Paul. In the last chapter of the Book of Acts, the Apostle Paul also recited Isaiah 6:9, linking the prophecy to the Jewish nation, without mentioning any parable. This hardening continues until today or until the Day of the Lord. During the time of our Lord, there were many forced fulfilments, and some have difficulty questioning issues regarding John the Baptist, when the Lord Jesus descended down the Mount of Olives on a colt, and the speaking in tongues. Was John the Baptist the promised Elijah?

Each year with Passover, the Jews celebrate the feast with an empty chair, for fear that Elijah may appear and join them. For this is how the Old Testament ends:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” (Mal. 4:5–6) Before the dreadful ‘Day of the Lord’, Elijah will come. This prophecy may have been fulfilled if the Jews accepted Christ, in which case John the Baptist would have been the true Elijah. We read the following regarding the birth of John the Baptist: “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:16–17) When Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was told about this, he must have thought that his son was the promised Elijah. However, when John was asked whether he was Elijah, he denied this and said that he was the voice of one calling in the wilderness, as written in Isaiah 40:3–4. I believe that the climax of all the prophecies will be in the near future, and then Christ will rightfully claim His throne. Amazingly, Israel is on the map as it was 2000 years ago. The Jewish nation did surface, and many do live in Israel. Their age-old enemy (the Palestinian people) is back in the land. The actors are ready, and they eagerly await the final play. They are eyeing each other, and we know how it will end. Generally speaking, the prophecies of the Old Testament have three fulfilments.

The first were fulfilled during the time of the prophets or shortly afterwards. An example is the life history of Jonah, Nebuchadnezzar who lost his mind for seven years, and the Jews entering the Babylonian captivity.

The second fulfilment borders the events of Christ’s first coming to earth; the third fulfilment is yet future. We need to be alert and believe the trustworthiness of God’s Word. If we adopt the ‘wait and see’ attitude, we will end up like doubting Thomas, who wanted to probe the Lord’s wounds before believing Him. Our faith in His simple Word will be our greatest

reward. We will not progress if we refuse to believe in the resurrected Christ, and today so many teachers of the law are so close to the truth and yet so far. Our intelligence is not of essence, but our faith is. With the parable of the sower, the different soils on which the seeds fell represent the different ways in which the people received and followed Christ's teachings. It reflects their attitude to the Word of God, and it is enfolded into the mysteries of God. The Book of Revelation commences with the mystery of God, the mystery of the seven stars or the seven churches. The mystery of His kingdom (Church) continues until Revelation 6, when His kingdom is revealed. The seven Churches in the Book of Revelation Ch. 2 & 3 picture the history of the churches during the past 2000 years, and the message is in harmony with the response of the people to the sower, who scattered the seed on the land. I do not believe there was a physical Church of Laodicea or Sardis, and my reason is they are mentioned to portray God's dealing in our time of grace. It is a vision, as with the complete Book of Revelation. Today God works on the quiet, and He sows the seed, and their response to the Word of God is vital, and it is likened to the seed falling on the hard ground, the stony ground, between the thorns, or on fertile soil. The harvest will be on the 'last day.' They are the four main responses the people have towards the Gospel. The seed is the Word of God. The hard ground 'by the wayside' prevents the seed from sprouting, and the seed becomes nothing more than bird food. The people are hardened by sin; he hears but he does not understand the Word, and Satan ensures that the message finds 'no root' in such people. It makes no impression on their lives. The birds symbolise the evil spirits, the powers of heaven under Satan's control. The stony ground provides enough soil for the seeds to germinate and to grow, but because there is "no deepness of earth," the plants do not take root but are stunted in growth once they are withered in the sun. Perhaps they were attracted to the great Church cathedrals, but if they are not rooted in the Word of God, they can be scorched and withered away once the opposition arises. If we are not rooted in the teachings of the Gospel, then it is equated to us having a stony heart. He will listen to the Word of God, but his heart is not changed. Once he is persecuted, he renounces any knowledge of Christ. The thorny ground allows the seed to grow, but the competing thorns choke the life out of it. When they have heard the message, they went on their way, but were soon choked, strangled, or drowned with the cares or distractions of the world, withdrawing themselves. It could be our riches or our pleasures that make us lose interest in His Word. Nothing matures, and soon the sun saps all the strength from the seed. They hear the Word, but their daily cares, the deceitfulness of their riches, choke them, and their life becomes futile. The root of all evil is not their money but the love of money. (1 Tim. 6:10) The most subtle thorns to choke out the effect of the Gospel in our lives are the worldly forces that Jesus called the 'cares and riches and pleasures of this life.' (Luke 8:14) Many people worry about the future, paralysing them into thinking they need more investments. It is the least of our fears, and it will hamper our progress in faith. The good ground portrays the one who hears, understands, and receives the Word—allowing the Word to take root. The man who bears fruit has his roots in

the ‘good ground’, and from the four, he is the only one who is truly saved, because salvation’s proof is in the fruit he bears. He accepts the Word of God with a good heart. Our reward is the fruit we bear.
Some thirtyfold, others sixtyfold, and the best is a hundredfold. Why these numbers? The number 3 hints at a promise or a plan of something special. But with the number 4, it materialises, and it is real. The 3 gives an outline, and it is not tangible, but we can picture it in our mind to what we expect it to be. It is as a design captured by an architect on a piece of paper, and the actual building is the number 4. The number 3 is equated to the promises God made in the Old Testament to Abraham when he said that his seed will be a great multitude. Once His promises to Abraham are tangible, then he will be totally part of the new creation. We, as the firstborn in Christ, do await the promises with our rapture, and thus the number 60. It is 30 × 2, as the firstborn has a double portion, as it involves both heaven and earth. The number 100 is to enter the kingdom. The tabernacle had three entrances, and the first was the gate, and its dimensions were 5 × 20 cubits (100 cubits). The door leading to the sanctuary and the door to the inner Sanctuary (that was partitioned by the inner veil) were both 10 × 10 cubits (100). Thus, there were three entrances, and each was 100 cubits square. Perhaps the most famous and least misunderstood hyperbole in the Bible is found in Matt. 19:24: “…it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” By definition, a hyperbole is an exaggeration to support a statement. Traditionally, it is known there was a gate in the walls of Jerusalem called the ‘Needle’s Eye,’ through which an unladen camel could narrowly squeeze. Unfortunately, this interpretation is not valid, as there never used to be such a gate in Jerusalem. After all, it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and that was precisely Jesus’ point. It is impossible for a person to enter the kingdom if he is totally tied up to his riches. The Hebrew word for a camel is the number 3 or Gimel, and it is the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Now, interestingly, in this parable, the needle in Hebrew is Koph or 100. It is known as our letter Q, and if it is written correctly, it is like something (thread) piercing a needle. It is easier for a camel (3) to enter the needle (100) than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. A needle or 100 has to do with entering the kingdom of God, and a camel (3) will not enter a needle (100), as statistically it will be an infinite 3. 3333333. Simply said, a 3 cannot be divided into the 100. The camel pictures a believer who is heading for the kingdom, and a camel can easily traverse the desert, as the camel is not that dependent on what he drinks or eats. Thus, a camel is strong enough to easily escort us through the desert, and it pictures us or any believer crossing a barren desert void of life—a desert that is not easily traversed. The reason is that the camel has the water or the Word of God, and the fat on the camel’s hump is the earthly blessings we are endowed with. The fat surrounding the entrails suggests man’s inner strength, his hope, and his future expectations. (Lev. 7) We will safely enter the new heaven and earth, and we don’t need to be frightened. If we are in the kingdom, then we will meet the King, and this experience is tied to the number 100. Abraham was 100 years old when

Isaac was born, and I will not be surprised if they both share the same birthday. 99 is $3^2 \times 11$, and the many 3's confer a promise that is made, something drawn on paper. We can visualise it in our minds, but it is not fulfilled (100). We are familiar with the third dispensation that commenced with Abraham, and once it is tangible, then it becomes a 4. We too live in faith as Abraham, and we await the rapture to be totally part of the 4. Whatever the final results of the sower, he has no way to determine which seed will bear fruit, and which seed will be wasted. Today we can scatter the seeds, and if we do, we need to entrust the results to God. It is the power of His Word that will change their lives. The importance is that the seed is sown.

Mark 4:21–25
And he also said unto them, "Is the lamp brought to be put under the bushel or under the bed? And not to be set on the lampstand? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; nor secret which shall not be exposed. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." And he also said unto them, "Take heed what ye hear; with the measure ye measure by, ye shall be measured by others, and unto you that hear shall more be added. For he that has, to him shall be given; and he that has not, from him shall be taken even that which he has." This passage is closely related to the Parable of the Sower. It, too, is about God's truth and how we react to it. The lamp or the candle in this parable represents the truth. A lamp has a definite purpose—to shed light. It should therefore be put where it will serve its purpose—on the lampstand. Just as the candle needs to be placed on the candlestick, so Christ's truth has to be put into practice. A lamp does not serve its purpose if it is hidden under a bucket. It will do absolutely no good there. God's truth is useless if it is put into the back of our minds to be never acted upon. There are so many truths taught by Christ, and if we hide the lamp under a bucket, we will never become what He intends us to be. The 'Light' confronts men and women with a stark choice: either to accept Christ and receive eternal life or reject Him and be doomed to die. If a lamp is put under a bucket, it will eventually go out. What will happen to the man who studied everything about swimming but never practises it when he is thrown into the sea? He drowns! Many people are hearers of the Gospel but never apply it. It is like placing the light beneath a bucket. If the bucket flips, there is no light—no evidence of an active faith.

Mark 4:26–29
He also said, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring forth and grow up, he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself: first the blade, then the ear, after that the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puts in the sickle because the harvest is come."
Although some have suggested that this is Mark's variation of the Parable of the Tares of the Field, there is no reason to assume this. This parable is quite different from the Parable of the Tares of the Field, and it teaches us

a unique lesson. Jesus does not explain the meaning of this parable. The man casting the seed is the sower earlier in this chapter. It says the same man who casts the seed will swing the sickle; thus, I believe that the man in this parable is Christ. The seed is thrown indiscriminately on the land. Therefore, in this way, it matches the picture in the Parable of the Sower of the Seed. That is, the seed falls where it may. It pictures that the Gospel is preached during the night when our Lord sleeps. The seed sprouts and grows; that is, the Word of God results in people becoming Christians. The 'night' is the 2000 years we now live in. We read that the man does not know how this happens. This should not be seen as a deficiency in the man. Jesus' intention is not to say anything about the man here, but to express that a mystery is at work here. He is conveying a concept similar to what He said to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (Jn. 3:8) In other words, we notice that the way in which the Gospel brings forth a harvest of saved people is a mystery. The power of God's Word is at play. Just as it is a mystery how something so mundane-looking as a seed can bring forth a plant that produces fruit, so it is a mystery how the Gospel results in the formation of the Church. The second part of Mark 4:28 describes the sequence of growth: "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This is talking about growth, from the time of seeing the first green blades of grain plants sprouting from the ground to the time of harvest. But when is this harvest that Jesus is talking about? John 4:35 says, "Say not ye, 'There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?' behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." This was a harvest that was ready even at that time. The sickle and the harvest are also quoted in the Book of Revelation.

"And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for you to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." (Rev. 14:15–19) Today the earth is swamped in darkness, and Christ is not actively involved with the matters of our world. To the world, He is dead or asleep. Things will change once He awakes, and it will happen with His return to earth. Things will change, and then there will be a great harvest to separate the tares from the wheat. Today we need to be patient, and the Word of God needs to mature inside of us. Our Lord is not troubled with the world or our daily plight. The Word of God is not to be occupied with ourselves or how we progress financially in life—NO—God's purpose is to expose the light, who is Christ.

Mark 4:30–34

He also said, "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that are in the earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs and shoots out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge

under the shadow of it.” And with many such parables he spoke the word unto them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable he did not speak unto them; and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples. The mustard tree is not a tree at all but is classified as an evergreen shrub. The tree grows to about 6 metres high, and it has an irregular shape. It is nearly as wide as it is tall. The branches start to grow very low to the ground. With the parable of the mustard seed, something unusually big develops. It represents the kingdom’s (Church’s) growth, in accord with the other tree/kingdom references as in Daniel 4:11–21 and Ezekiel 17:23. The seed’s rapid growth attracts the presence of evil, and they are depicted by the birds. (Matt. 13:4, 19; Rev. 18:2) The mere size dilutes the effectiveness of the Church while the evil forces are taking advantage of its benefits. The seed had a humble beginning, and the churches experienced an explosive growth curve. The seed pictures the faith of the disciples who were so small, and yet it attained so much. The so-called scrub grew into a large tree, and it became a source of food, rest, and shelter for both the believers and false professing individuals seeking to benefit themselves. Jesus predicts that the Church will grow extremely large from just a small start, and it will not remain pure. The developing churches become a monolithic structure that towers over all of creation. I love this interpretation because it is so anti-establishment. It teaches us that the Church shouldn't be trying to be a great giant that everyone looks at in awe for its sheer brilliance, but it ought to be a bush —a low-lying bush with little self-esteem. Nowadays, the actual kingdom of Christ is hidden and out of sight for the world. We are totally part of Christ, and He was disowned by the world, crucified outside Jerusalem. Similarly, we are outside Jerusalem and in the desert.

“Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” (Heb. 13:13)

Even though we enjoy life, our heart is not really settled or fixed on earth. The desires of our heart are set on the things in heaven, experiencing no esteem from earth. God uses individuals and not the ‘brickwork’ to promote His kingdom. Jesus rebuked the powerful Churches who monopolise money, property, and education. Once the Church became affluent, then the satanic forces make it their home. They find their shade in the big old tree because it became what it was not supposed to be. The churches harbour the demonic powers when they become too big for their own boots; we ought to be a bush and no tree. The following parable, as recorded in the Book of Matthew, is the parable of the yeast—and here something is quietly hidden in the dough. Something dodgy was buried in the flour before being baked in the oven. The new dough had three measures of flour, and secretly the old yeast from the previous day is hidden in it. The fresh bread without the yeast personifies the new covenant, whereas any bread with the old yeast typifies the old covenant. Unknowingly, the yeast of the previous day did work its way into the new dough and caused the loaf to swell and get big. The volume increased, but not the weight. Again, we find something bulky, having no substance. The new covenant is eternal, and it does not need the yeast (decay) or anything coupled with the old creation. Once we do, we lose the real

substance, who is Christ. Leaven symbolises sin and the sinful nature that previously spoiled our world. (1 Cor. 5:6–8) It also reflects the people who wrongly interpreted the Word of God. (Matt. 16:6, 11, 12; Luke 12:1; Mark 8:15) Leaven is an example of man's disobedience to God's Word. (Gal. 5:7–10)

Mark 4:35–41

And that same day, when evening was come, he said unto them, "Let us pass over unto the other side." And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow; and they awoke him and said unto him, "Master, dost thou not care that we perish?" And as he arose, he rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly and said one to another, "Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" This storm pictures many things to us. It was dark and eerie, and they sailed from west to east on the Sea of Galilee, heading towards Gadarenes, which was not part of Israel. Besides, there was a storm, and their boat was about to sink. This journey proved hazardous, and death stared them in the face; it frightened the disciples. The Sea of Galilee is no ordinary sea. It is 210 metres below sea level, the lowest-lying fresh water lake in the world. Across it measures 13 kilometres, and the depression in the earth's crust is caused by the Jordan rift valley. It is a tear in the earth's crust, allowing a large section of the earth to drop up to 400 metres at the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee sit in what is referred to as the Jordan Valley rift system. The west side of the valley is part of the African plate, and the east side is part of the Arabian plate. These two plates are sliding past each other, and in a few places they are also pulling apart from each other. The result of this sliding and pulling is a rift valley. As the plates have pulled apart, the area between the plates receded, resulting in a sediment-filled crack well below sea surface. A huge part of the Middle East is literally being ripped and torn apart geologically. The rift starts a few kilometres north of the Sea of Galilee, which is situated north-east of Israel, near the Golan Heights. The Jordan Valley rift system heads towards the Dead Sea and then continues through the Arabah depression, the Gulf of Aqaba, the Red Sea, and finally the great African Rift Valley. The African Rift Valley extends to Lesotho in the Drakensberg Mountains. On both sides of the Jordan, we have steep mountain ranges up to 1000 metres, and most of it is uninhabitable, making it a breeding ground for wild animals. It is easy to imagine that the great depression in the earth's crust is comparable to a grave, and death. The word arabah is tied to the word death, and for a reason, the Dead Sea is called the 'Dead Sea.' Arabah, garabah, graben (German) is tied to the grave and death. The rift valley forms a spectacular graben (a massive tectonic trough) running right down the middle of Israel. Whenever our Lord or reborn Israel traverses the depression of the 'rift valley', it is

accompanied by God’s majestic power. It happened when Israel crossed the Red Sea, which is part of the valley, and even the River Jordan. Similarly, when the disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee, it was done in splendour, and the disciples were left speechless. On the day when Israel escaped Egypt to enter the cleaved Red Sea to allow the children of Israel to cross the mighty waters—it pictures their death and resurrection. When they embarked on the other side of the sea, the new dispensation dawned for them. Finally, they did turn their backs to a life of slavery. Moses, who led the people from Egypt via the Red Sea, portrays our own death and resurrection in Christ. As the nation descended into the water (death), it cheated death, and similarly we defeated death. Christ deserves far greater glory than Moses, just as a person who builds a fine house deserves more praise than the house itself. (Heb. 3:3) Similarly, when Israel crossed the River Jordan with Joshua, it exemplifies rebirth and how the land of Canaan will be conquered by Israel.

At Gilgal, 12 stones were erected as a monument to signify their rebirth, and their circumcision at Gilgal (wheel) denotes our rebirth. Both Elijah and Elisha crossed the River Jordan, but Elisha did it twice. The Sea of Galilee was tamed by our Lord to picture that the powers of death will be defeated with His resurrection. In the valley lurked many dangers, like the hostile animals on its sheer cliffs. They had to cross the ‘rift’, and symbolically they entered the grave or the deep waters. When our Lord calmed the seas, He quietened the strong wind that whipped the waves, threatening to capsize the boat. Strangely, our Lord was sleeping undisturbed, and to the world and the disciples, He was fast asleep. I don’t blame the people today for reasoning God is dead. Ever since His death on the cross, He hid His face from the earth, and the rulers colluded against Him. Everything is our doing and not God’s. To the world, He is sleeping, but the sleeping GIANT will awake. Each time a boat is threatened by a large storm, the people on the boat are terrified, and they will not sleep, but our Lord did. He is not concerned about the many wars we caused. When He awakes, the Book of Revelation will unfold, and the Millennium will commence.

Verse 39 is pivotal as it looks ahead to Christ's resurrection and His final return to Earth.

‘And as he arose, he rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ’

The theme of many a Christian song is the sea, as we are tossed about and the boat is steered by the rolling waters of the sea and the wind. It will never be calm and we need to keep our head above the water. If we cannot swim, we will drown and disappear in the deep waters. It may sound cynical but it’s true. We can swim in it, but we cannot master the waters or walk on it like our Lord. To walk on the water is equated to having power over the dead.

The depths of the sea hide the dungeon of death, and above the waters we are tossed about by the sea of nations – we need to keep our head above water. The wind causing the storms is the teachings of Satan.

We are no longer tossed about by the winds in the sea; ‘so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by

every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.’ Eph. 4:14 The teachings of Satan will end once the oceans become calm. Christ alone can calm the roaring seas, their crashing waves, and the uproar of the nations. Ps. 65:7 Today Satan has power over death, and he is known by many names. He rules the waves. The logo of Starbucks is the twin-tailed mermaid, and it is a symbol of Satan. In Greek mythology, Poseidon is called the ‘God of the Sea’ and additionally, he is referred to as ‘earth shaker’, causing earthquakes. Dagon, the god of the Philistines, had a man's body and a fish's tail.

In the Bible the sea could mostly be interpreted as death, as in the Book of Revelation. The Book says the sea gave up their dead. Rev. 20:13 This is true as prophesied in the Psalms. 18:16-17 It says He reached down from heaven and He rescued me; He drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me.

The word sea is synonymous with the word ‘abyss,’ Gen. 1:2 which originates from the Hebrew word ‘tehowm.’ This word appears 35 times in the Old Testament. At the portals of the abyss we do not only find the realm of the dead, but much more. At the bottom of the oceans we find traces of our previous fallen world. God will rid the world of all the splinters of the old creation! When our Lord calmed the sea in Mark 4, he conquered the abyss or the realm of the dead. I cannot help but notice that Ezekiel 37:1 pictures the valley of the dry bones.

‘The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ’

We could translate this as ‘the valley’, but this begs the question, ‘which valley?’ Why the definite article? Is this a reference to the rift valley in general?

As the rift valley widens, its large basin is filled with sediment from the rift walls. The valley holds the deep waters and in the same valley we will find Israel who disappeared to live amongst the other heathen nations (sea). Ezekiel was whisked away to a valley full of bones which start to rattle and hum as they joined together to form skeletons … and then dead flesh and skin starts to envelope the lifeless skeletons so that they become corpses. Then the wind blows wildly from all directions and all the bodies come to life and they stand up to become a great army. It sounds like a script from a horror movie.

‘Then [God] said to me, … these bones represent the people of Israel. … I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel…. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done what I said. Yes, the LORD has spoken!’ … I will gather the people of Israel from among the nations. I will bring them home to their own land from the places where they have been scattered. I will unify them into one nation on the mountains of Israel. One king will rule them all; no longer will they be divided into 2 nations or into two kingdoms. They will never again pollute themselves with their idols and vile images and rebellion, for I will save them from their sinful backsliding. I will cleanse them. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God. Eze. 37:11-23In other words these bones that Ezekiel saw in a vision

2500 years ago represented complete Israel … both the 2 and the 10 lost tribes of Israel. This is not my interpretation – Ezekiel explicitly said so himself. Ezekiel foresaw the return of Israel from the ‘nations’ and ‘places where they had been scattered’ back to that same land that they had been ejected from, where they would be ‘one nation’ with their own ‘king’ or ruler. What is even more remarkable is that Ezekiel ‘saw’ it in his vision 2500 years ago.
The Church is also drawn from the sea, and we are like the fish caught in a net hauled to the land. It is like Moses who was rescued from a basket in the Nile River. The first mentioned fish were the whales as they do not really belong in the sea like us. They breathe air like us and yet they are trapped in the waters. Even one of the Zodiac's is called a dolphin, and the ‘fish’ is a well-known emblem of the Church.
Our Lord knew He was untouchable and nothing could happen to Him. He had a mission and He would live to fulfil it, knowing He would survive the storm. Similarly King David had the same faith when He fought the giant Goliath. He knew God made him king and his wishes would be fulfilled. Nothing would stand in his way – and thus he approached Goliath with great confidence. Once King Saul came very close to capturing David, and King Saul was backed by an army of 3,000 men. David eluded all the men, and he crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. 1 Sam. 24:4 How daring.
Satan will be stripped of his power and he will not rule the sea death. The nations or the 2 and the 10 lost tribes of Israel. The following chapter delves into this.

Mark 5:1–20
1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him a man of the tombs, with an unclean spirit, 3 who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, no, not with chains, 4 because many times he had been bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been broken in pieces by him, and the fetters shattered; neither could anyone tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and hurting himself with stones. 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him. 7 Crying out with a loud voice, he said, What hast thou with me, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. 9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion, for we are many. 10 And he besought him much that he would not send him away out of that country. 11 Now near unto the mountains there was a great herd of swine feeding, 12 and all those devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine, and the herd fell over a cliff into the sea (they were about two thousand) and were choked in the sea. 14 And those that fed the swine fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people went out to see what it was that had happened. 15 And they come

to Jesus and see him that was tormented by the demon and had the legion sitting and clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 And those that saw it told them what happened to him that had the demon and also concerning the swine. 17 And they began to plead with him to depart out of their borders. 18 And as he was entering into the ship, he that had been troubled by the demon besought him that he might be with him. 19 But Jesus suffered him not but said unto him, Go home to thy friends and family and tell them what great things the Lord has done with thee and how he has had mercy on thee. 20 And he went and began to publish in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done with him, and everyone marvelled.

They crossed the Sea of Galilee and docked the boat at Gadarenes. It was part of the Decapolis, ten cities who were grouped together, functioning as an autonomous city state. Though sometimes described as a ‘league’ of cities. There were 10 cities and the 10 needs to remind us of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. Ever since our Lord resurrected from the dead, the Apostle Peter foremost preached to the Jewish nations but the Sanhedrin refused Christ’s invitation. Thus the apostles were prompted to preach the Gospel to the other 10 lost tribes of Israel and they were susceptible. He went to the ‘other’ lost sheep. Before this happened they were met with a great surprise. As Jesus and his storm-drenched disciples depart from the boat, they are confronted with a terrifying spectacle. It was a man possessed with demons who lived in the tombs.

This would be a good opportunity to review what the Bible has to say about the subject of demons: Demons are real. Satan inspires them and Satan is known as the ‘prince of the powers of the air.’ Eph. 2:2 The demons lost their previous bodies in a great deluge. The flood encircled our earth long before Adam. The demons can communicate on a spiritual level, and wish to vacate a body or object in which to live on earth. In this chapter many demons lived in a sick man as well as in a herd of pigs, to finally return to a place below the sea, a place they are familiar with. The sea is their preliminary judgement, but they will be given a final sentence. When we study the demons in the KJV we will discover that the word is wrongly written as 'devils.’ The English word demon is derived from the Greek word daimon, and they are evil spirits.

Fallen angels are different and they do have celestial bodies, therefore they have no need to dwell in us. Demons are desperate and they will even settle for the bodies of animals. The demons fancy us if we are vegetarians and do not marry, taking drugs, so we are more reliant on them. Their first advice to them is a change of diet, to weaken themselves.

The demons knew beyond question the true identity of Jesus. The demons identified Jesus. Now He calls upon them to identify themselves. And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.

They demons used the voice of the man.

There were many men in Roman legion. On this occasion 2000 pigs drowned, as there were so many demons inside of them.

They recognize His power over them and so they ask permission to enter into a nearby herd of pigs.

The implication is that, without His permission, they would have been powerless to accomplish this. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported this to the city, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.
The people from the country asked Him to leave, as they were gripped with great fear. He got into a boat and returned.
Pigs are considered by the Jews to be an unclean animal. The Jews were forbidden to eat pork and they had nothing to do with pigs. But these people are not Jewish. They were known as barbarians not adhering to the Roman or Greek culture. To the Celtic people, a pig was a holy animal. The pig was to them what the lamb meant to the Jews.
But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him, that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.
The man became a missionary to the entire Decapolis - this region had ten major cities. The next time Jesus did visit this region, they did not ask Him to leave.
Mark 7:31
When Jesus returned to the Decapolis, a crowd of 4000 people gathered to hear Him preach.
After our Lord is resurrected, many miracles are unfolded in the early Church's history. There are several legends today of such monsters and evil demons. One is with the Christianisation of France. It is accomplished by those who witnessed the miracles of Jesus and the Passion themselves. Europe is riddled with folklores of monsters that were killed.
One such history is The Provençal Christian legend, which maintains that Martha and Mary Magdalene were thrown onto a boat with 10 other people without sail or oar in Palestine. They were heavily persecuted by the Jewish nations and miraculously they landed in Marseille in 48 AD. Martha went up the Rhône and came to Tarascon where a monster, whose den was near the river, did run wild and was named Tarasque. The people of Tarascon begged for help and Martha captured the beast and took it to the people who tore it to pieces and they converted to the new religion. Still today, a procession is held the second Sunday after Pentecost, with a home-made monster spouting smoke from its nostrils.
In the Book Matthew 8:28 we read there were 2 demon possessed people and to me that is not strange. Late in the ministry of Jesus, we read of a blind man who was healed, Mark 8:35 but in the Book Matthew 20:30 we read of 2 blind men that were healed. The reason of the '2' is to portray Ephraim who is the firstborn and he personifies the Church. Ephraim means a double fruit as the Church will be blessed being part of both heaven and earth. With Christ resurrection there were 2 men standing at an empty tomb. On the same day He met two men walking to Emmaus and He opened the Scriptures to them to explain everything that happened to Him, but only one is named. With Christ ascension on the

Mount of Olives, two men stood on the place where He ascended into heaven.
The Celtic people treasured the pigs and Obelix the Gaul, was obsessed by them. Pigs have a number of anatomic and physiologic similarities to humans, and studies prove that many of the pig's organ systems are 80 to 90 percent similar to the corresponding systems in humans – both in anatomy and function. The system that matches up best may be the cardiovascular system, as a pig's heart is about the same size and shape as a human heart. They are used for valve replacements.
In the New Testament we read of the prodigal son who gladly ate the pods that were meant for the swine he herded. Luke 15:16 It is the parable of the two sons and it etches both the tribe Ephraim (10) and Judah. (2) The one son who left his father, spilled his inheritance to portray Ephraim, and the other son who remained faithfully with his father portrays Judah. The prodigal son lost everything and he squandered much of his time attending to the pigs. When he decided to return to his father, his father whole-heartedly accepted him. The other son felt embittered. The prodigal son was dressed with the finest robe and he even killed the calf that was fattened in the pen. His father was cheerful as his son was dead and now he returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found. Luke 15 The other son who remained with his father is Judah, and he was steeped in the laws of Moses, and in the end he snubbed his brother. He sulked and refused to enjoy the banquet his father prepared for his lost brother. With the repentance of the prodigal son, he was blessed with the blessings of the new covenant and thus the mentioning of the words as joy, the finest robe, and 'he was dead and now he is alive. '
Without a doubt Ephraim did return and we are at the banquet. Jeremiah 31 was written long after Ephraim and the 10 lost tribes of Israel disappeared into the Assyrian captivity. When the prodigal son tended the pigs, he must have read Jeremiah; 31:18 'I have certainly heard Ephraim mourn and say, 'You disciplined me, and I was disciplined. I was like a young, untrained calf. Turn me, and I will be turned, because you are the LORD my God.' Ephraim the firstborn and he will return! Ephraim proved to be a real blessing to the world and they were always receptive to the Gospel, and the United Kingdom sent many missionaries reaching all of Europe and the major continents of the earth. They conquered the mighty oceans.

Mark 5:21–43
When Jesus had crossed again in a boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he was by the sea. 22 Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came up, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He asked him urgently, 'My little daughter is near death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be healed and live.' 24 Jesus went with him, and a large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25 Now a woman was there who had been suffering from a haemorrhage for twelve years. 26 She had endured a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet instead of getting better, she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in

the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 for she kept saying, ‘If only I touch his clothes, I will be healed.’ 29 At once the bleeding stopped, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 Jesus knew at once that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ 31 His disciples said to him, ‘You see the crowd pressing against you and you say, ‘Who touched me?’’ 32 But he looked around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, with fear and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease. ’35 While he was still speaking, people came from the synagogue ruler’s house saying, ‘Your daughter has died. Why trouble the teacher any longer?’ 36 But Jesus, paying no attention to what was said, told the synagogue ruler, ‘Do not be afraid; just believe.’ 37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. 38 They came to the house of the synagogue ruler where he saw noisy confusion and people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 When he entered he said to them, ‘Why are you distressed and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.’ 40 And they began making fun of him. But he put them all outside and he took the child’s father and mother and his own companions and went into the room where the child was. 41 Then, gently taking the child by the hand, he said to her, ‘Talitha koum,’ which means, ‘little girl, I say to you, get up.’ 42 The girl got up at once and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). They were completely astonished at this. 43 He strictly ordered that no one should know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

This history continues with the strong theme in the Book of Mark, to draw a distinction between the 2 and the 10 lost tribes of Israel. It surfaces all the time. The central story is a woman with the haemorrhage, and it is embedded in the story of Jairus' daughter. This account of two women, one mature and the other a young girl, shows how Jesus' ministry gives priority to the poor and the outcasts (10 lost tribes of Israel). Each story is meant to interpret the other. The 10 lost tribes of Israel who were steeped in demonic practices, were poorly having a haemorrhagic disease. They were like the demonic man earlier in this chapter.

Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, must have felt despondent when his daughter was critically ill and he had to approach Jesus, to ask Him to visit him. He thought once our Lord placed His hands on her, she would be healed. Jairus had no easy task to find our Lord and there were several hindrances. First, there was a huge and seemingly unruly crowd, who crowded upon Jesus, making His travel very slow. Second, there was a woman who slipped in behind the Lord Jesus, secretly stealing a touch of His garment, which instantly healed her of a 12-year ailment. This healing was instant, but what followed was painfully slow. Jesus, knowing that power had left Him, stopped, not willing to continue His journey until the person who touched Him was known. All of this took time, time which seemed to endanger the life of Jairus’s daughter. We are not told of Jairus’ response, but Luke informs us that the disciples (Peter in particular) were perturbed by Jesus’ actions.

Two miracles happened, which are carefully intertwined. In reality, the miracle of the healing of Jairus' daughter is interrupted by the healing of the woman with the haemorrhage. For a short time, it appeared as if the healing of the woman cost the life of Jairus' daughter.
The 'tension of this text' is this: why did Jesus take such a long time to determine the true identity of the person who touched Him, when it seemed an impossible task to do, and when it threatened the life of the girl who was mortally ill?
Mark and Luke depict Jairus as describing his daughter's condition as critical—she was dying. Matthew 9:18 suggests that she had already died. As precious time lapsed, it is not difficult to imagine that Jairus may have suspected the worst had already happened. Nevertheless, even if she had died, Jairus believed that Jesus' touch could heal her. Jesus agreed and they were on their way to his house. Just then a woman interrupted the journey when she touched unnoticed the Lord's garment.
She was instantly healed.

The woman, whose name is never given, had suffered from a haemorrhage for 12 years. It prevented her from becoming pregnant. It is not difficult to understand why she approached Jesus, unseen, from behind, while Jairus faced our Lord, falling at His feet. Jairus beseeched the Lord to bring healing to his daughter; but the woman did not even ask, doing everything on the quiet. This woman had a discharge of blood (menorrhagia) for 12 years and miraculously she was still alive. She would be unclean as long as she had the discharge. The Jewish law deemed whoever touched her as unclean.
It is especially clear in Luke's account that the woman desired anonymity: Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at Jesus feet. 8:47 She was humble and in meekness she approached the Lord as the prodigal son who returned to his father after spending all his money. The Prodigal son as the woman pictures the 10 lost tribes of Israel who were taught a hard lesson, as they trusted the demons and the foreign gods. She approached the Lord as unclean. But once she touched the Lord's garment, she was instantly healed. No doubt she intended to remain as inconspicuous as possible, and just let Jesus and the crowd pass on, leaving her alone. She wanted to go unnoticed, to return to her home and lead a normal life. Jesus would not have it this way, however. The disciples were dumbfounded when Jesus stopped and asked who touched Him. Peter spoke for the others when he said, 'Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you'
Luke 8:45 Peter felt it was his responsibility to rebuke Jesus, thinking to identify the one person who touched Him in a crowd, seemed an impossible task. We may question what difference did it make anyway? The reason is this history is filled with symbolism, and something had to be learned from this.
Jesus would not be deterred, however. He obviously had a good reason for pressing this matter, but what was the reason? Why did Jesus delay this

urgent journey to the house of Jairus, only to learn who had touched Him, even if it had produced a healing?
There are at least two answers, I believe.
It was for the good of the woman who was healed.
The delay was also for the good of Jairus and his daughter.
Let us first consider how this delay was for the good of the woman.
Initially, no one admitted that they had touched Jesus. There seemed to be a stalemate. But Jesus would not let the matter drop, even though the disciples protested. Finally, the woman recognised that she must confess. Fearfully, she came to Jesus, where she fell at His feet. Before the crowd, she bore witness as to why she had touched Jesus, and how He had healed her. Jesus had very few words to say to the woman, but they are very important ones. Let us look at them carefully:
'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. '
Note the position of the woman, since she identified herself. Before, she was behind Jesus, out of His sight but now she is at Jesus' feet, just as Jairus had been.
I may be in error here, but it would seem to me that the woman came to Jesus secretly, from behind, because she felt that she was unworthy to approach Him directly. Jairus approached our Lord confidently.
Jesus identified faith as the real cause of this miracle. She believed, as the other gospels record, that if she were to touch Jesus she would be healed. She not only believed this intellectually, she acted on it. It was Jesus' power that healed her; but from another point of view, it was the woman's faith which caused her healing, while the rest of crowd was not blessed as she was.
There is a reason why Jesus would insist that the raising of Jairus' daughter be kept silent, while here Jesus forced the woman to make her healing public. I think I understand why. It was not the miracle which Jesus wanted to make public, but rather the woman's faith and who she really represents. She pictures the 'lost sheep' who are found.
As the woman went her way, a messenger came from the house of Jairus. The girl had died. All hope, he suggested, was lost, so there is no need to trouble 'the teacher' any more. The prevailing opinion of the people was, where there's life, there is hope.
Jesus might have been able to heal a sick child, but they did not view Him as having power over death. Jesus assured Jairus: 'Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed' As Jesus approached the house of Jairus, He left all but three of His closest disciples went with Him. A crowd had already gathered who mourned for the dead child. Our Lord assured them that the girl was not dead, but asleep. Mourning turned to scornful laughter.
Conclusion
The miracle of both the child and the woman is to illustrate the history of both the Jewish nations and the 10 lost tribes of Israel.
Jairus had been promised by the Lord Jesus that his house (Jewish nations) would be healed and he proved it with the resurrection of the child. The Old Testament prophets even described the 'healing' of Israel as a resurrection. Indeed his daughter was raised and unbelieving Israel is

rendered as ‘dead’ in the valley of the dead bones. It is like Israel saying: ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Ezek. 37:11 Many today believe God has no future for Israel and He is only involved with the Church. No! After the rapture of the Church our Lord will resurrect Israel and all their dreams will be realised.

Along comes a woman, when Jesus is in the process of dealing with Jairus, and she ‘steals’ a blessing from God. In the process of her doing so, there is an agonising delay, one which appears to be at the expense of Jairus. For at least a short time it would seem (or so it did to those who reported the girl’s death to Jairus) that the woman’s blessing cost the life of the daughter of Jairus. God seems to have been unnecessarily delaying her healing, so that the woman is blessed at the expense of the ruler of the synagogue. And, worse yet, the woman was declared unclean by the law, so that she would have been thought to have had no right to approach or touch Him. Here is Jairus, an apparently righteous, devout, and influential Jewish leader, whose ‘blessing’ is interrupted by an unclean woman, whose healing was undeserved, on several counts.

It sounds a great deal like what is going to take place with the 10 lost tribes of Israel. When Jesus, Israel’s Messiah came, the Jews naturally thought that it was solely for them, but Jesus often made it clear there were sheep ‘outside’ the fold. Something the Jews did not anticipate. Now we can notice that God’s plan for His people, the Jews, has been delayed, and that in the interim, the other sheep or the 10 lost tribes of Israel are blessed.

In Romans, chapters 9–11, Paul addresses this painful issue. He outlines that the purposes of God have always been to bless the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The blessing of each is not sovereign as each of their blessings are inter-related. Such was the case with the woman and Jairus. (And his daughter) The Apostle Paul tells us that the salvation of the Gentiles does not hinder or defeat the salvation of the Jews, but is a part of God’s design to bless both the Jews and the lost sheep, to ultimately bless the nations of the world.

The wild olive tree in Romans chapter 11 are the 10 tribes of Israel and the olive tree bearing fruit are the 2 tribes of Israel or the Jews. Remember the olive tree pictures Israel and not the Gentile nations, thus the distinction between the wild (10) and the fruit bearing (2) olive tree. The Word of God was entrusted to the two tribes of Israel, and they are the fruit bearing olive tree, but sadly things changed for them. The unbelieving branches were pruned to be replaced by the branches of the wild olive tree, who did believe in the resurrected Christ. In the framework of Romans 11, the fruit bearing tree are the 2 tribes of Israel, but they rejected Christ. Their branches are pruned to be replaced by the branches of the ‘believing’ people coming from the 10 lost tribes of Israel. They are grafted into the fruit bearing tree. Today the Word of God is entrusted to the Church, and the Apostle Paul did have us in mind, but not the Jewish nation. The Church will never nullify all the promises God once made to natural Israel, but things will change after the rapture of the Church. Yes, the Church originates from both the fruit bearing trees, (2 tribes of Israel) and the wild olive tree. (10 tribes of Israel) The fruit of the olive tree is the

oil and light, and it is the Church, and they are the believing people from Ephraim and not the unbelievers from Ephraim. They had the initiative to spread the Gospel to various parts of the world.
The Jews who rejected Christ opened the way for the lost sheep, paving a way for the Gentiles. That caused a great delay in the fulfilment of God's promises to the Jewish nations. The simple miracle of the 2 women does picture what God is currently doing on a much grander scale. Once Job 1:21 said: 'the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. '
Notice the 12 years. The daughter of Jairus was 12 years old when she became ill. That is the age when they can conceive a child. She should have been blessed by many children but she died. The Jewish nations should have accepted the resurrected Christ and they could have entered the Millennium to be blessed, but they opted otherwise.
Via the backdoor the woman soaked the blessings that were envisaged for the Jewish nations. The woman who had the bleeding disorder was infertile and is likened to a lame person who had no life inside of him. As long as the daughter of Jairus was alive, the woman was ill and infertile. They are the other lost sheep of the fold. For 12 years she was infertile due to her haemorrhagic disease but once she touched our Lord, she was healed and I am sure once this happened, she had many children and they are the Church. Today the Jewish nations are reckoned as dead and they have no hope. We are caught in a time when the woman is fertile and Jairus's daughter is infertile, lying in the grave.
The identity of the woman is a mystery. I firmly believe she pictures the 10 lost tribes of Israel and not the gentile nations or the Church. The Church was never lame or ill with haemophilia. She could not picture t
he gentile nations as she stood apart from the crowd. She was someone special. When the Lord approached her, He had a special message for her and it was addressed to the 10 lost tribes of Israel. It is similar to the Samaritan woman at the well John 4 who also pictured the 10 lost tribes of Israel and she was familiar with the Books of Moses. The lost tribes of Israel were prominent in the formation of the Church and the heathen nations were blessed by them.
With the rapture of the Church, all of Israel will accept the Lord and then Jairus's daughter will resurrect to be the leading nation on earth. Unknowingly and secretly the blessings of Ephraim or Joseph, who are the real firstborn, are absorbed by the Church today. They are the children born by the woman.
In the Book of Revelation, chapter 12, we read of a woman who also had a son, but the son was swept into heaven to be with Christ. The son who was swept to heaven does picture the rapture of the Church. Once Satan is humiliated to the earth, he cannot touch us or the son, but the woman or unbelieving Israel will experience the great tribulation.
This history in the New Testament foretells the great interruption we now experience today, and there are many more. In the Book Genesis we have 2 great examples. Joseph had a special coat specially made for him by his father Jacob. It depicted him as the first born. Joseph's dream of the 11 stars that bowed down before him, and it made his brothers even more suspicious. They were filled with rage and on one occasion he was thrown

in a deep pit, signifying his death. Everything was quiet for 20 years. Unknowingly during this quiet spell, the blessings tied to the firstborn were harnessed by Joseph. The great surprise was in Egypt, and this emotional encounter pictures Israel's repentance on the Day of the Lord. Joseph who lived for 20 years in Egypt, relays the history of the Church that went unnoticed, and his firstborn right made him ruler with Pharaoh. The same surprise will culminate with the resurrection of Jairus's daughter, and then the world will realise the great blessing we have as part of the Church.

There is another remarkable history in Genesis 38 that explains our dispensation. It is sandwiched between the 2 chapters dealing with the history of Joseph. This chapter is not very well known as it deals with the history of Judah (2 tribes) and the Church or the real firstborn. Tamar is in the centre of the chapter and her name in Hebrew means 'a palm tree.' It is a large tree with a crown of branches on top, and this crown conveys kingship. Tamar should have had a child from one of Judah's sons but it never happened. Unsuspectingly Judah her father in law involved himself with Tamar who disguised herself as a harlot. In the end Tamar walked away with the signet, the cord and staff that belonged to Judah. All three of them denote Judah's firstborn rights. The staff is mentioned several times in our Bible as the staff of Aaron that blossomed again. Num. 17:8 A signet ring with its emblem denotes the identity of the real firstborn. In this chapter the identity has changed and the staff, cord and signet has landed in the hands of the real firstborn. In the Old Testament it was given to Christ but via the Church we are imparted with all the blessings.

Both Judah and Tamar worked in the secret but in the end their identities were revealed. Tamar was in labour and her first child birth was tagged with a wrist band, a scarlet cord. At birth it is known as a hand presentation, but oddly the hand withdrew by itself. Tamar had twins. The hand that withdrew, was not the firstborn. That needs to draw our attention to Jacob and Esau and the discord they had to determine who the real firstborn was. Rebekah noticed the tussle while they were in her womb. The midwife wrongly assumed that the infant with the 'hand' was the firstborn. The appearing hand with the scarlet cord around its wrist, was not the first. He had to wait for his twin brother who was the real firstborn or Perez meaning a breach. The Church is the breach in God's history, and the birth of the second son had to wait until the Church is complete. Indeed the other child was born later who had the scarlet cord around its wrist.

In God's plan today there is a breach. When Judah's hand was pulled back into the womb, his blessings were instead poured out on the other child or Perez that in secret symbolised Joseph or the Church. The scarlet cord conveys that the real 'hope' is invested in Perez (Church) and not in Zarah. The word Judah (yadah) means a hand (yad), and it is the hand that appeared and disappeared to make way for real firstborn, which is Ephraim or the Church.

Simeon once prophesied when he saw the child Jesus. 'Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.' Acts 15:14If everything went according to plan Judah

would have been the firstborn but there was a twist in God's plan. Mysteriously the blessings did not go to the 2 tribes, but instead it is invested in the 10 lost tribes (lost sheep's) that were in the Assyrian exile. Today the promises of God are not locked away in the 'two' but rather in the 'ten. '
Today Zarah or the other twin remains in the womb, waiting to be born. That will happen during the great tribulation, once they call on the Name of the Lord.
The woman touched the hem of our Lord's garment, and I believe there is a weightier message for us. In the history of David we read that quietly at night, he cut the hem of King Saul's garment. 1 Sam. 24:5, 12 It was done in secret, as the woman touched the hem of our Lord's garment in secret. Symbolically the kingdom was given to a different people. This happened at night during our 5th dispensation, the 'hidden' period in God's calendar. The High Priest also had a garment and at the hem, he tied the pomegranates. (The 5th fruit. Deut. 8:8) They too bear witness of our 5th dispensation. On the day when King Saul died, Samuel turned to leave after he rebuked King Saul. Saul grabbed the hem of his robe, and he tore it. Samuel told him, 'the LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today. He has given it to your neighbour who is better than you.' 1 Sam. 15:27, 28 I believe this prophecy was fulfilled when the woman (the neighbour of Judah or the 2 tribes of Israel) touched the hem of our Lord's garment. The kingdom was entrusted to the 10 lost tribes of Israel. Where else is this prophecy fulfilled? The kingdom will be given to a different people and we know who they are. We can colour the picture book.

Mark 6:1-6
Jesus' Missing Years
1 And he went out from there and came into his own country, and his disciples followed him. 2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue; and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From where has this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him and such mighty works that are wrought by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and of Juda and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. 4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not dishonoured except in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house. 5 And he could do no mighty work there except that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them. 6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went through the villages round about, teaching
. Surprisingly, only a small minority of people did believe Jesus, thinking He had hordes of followers, from Galilee, as He was rejected in Judah. Our Lord mainly preached at Galilee and a few odd occasions at Judea, and only once at Samaria, when He spoke to the woman at the well. John 4 Galilee was separated from Judea by the non-Jewish territory of Samaria, known today as the West Bank. These verses are no surprise to us, as His message did not settle in the hearts of men. His disciples forbade Jesus to preach at Judea, knowing they wanted to kill Him. Capernaum is Jesus'

hometown Mark 2:1 and today Capernaum is ‘desolate and mournful,’ not a thriving town as in the days of Jesus. It is ruined and in 1866, they started to piece together the ruins, especially the synagogue, and possibly the house of Peter’s mother. It is merely to attract the tourist. For many, this would be clear evidence to Jesus' prophecy: ‘and you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.’ Matt. 11:23, 24 This prophecy is fulfilled and nothing is left of the cities, being levelled to the ground. Today there is a restoration, only to grip our imagination of how things may have looked like.

Our Lord’s said the only place where a prophet isn't honoured is in his hometown, among his own relatives, and house. So where was He honoured? This is a formidable question. If our Lord was not respected in Galilee, where else was He esteemed?
Certainly not in Judea or Galilee. In plain English our Lord was honoured elsewhere and we do have a problem. Judea, Samaria and Galilee rejected Him, so there has to be a country where He was welcomed, a place where they did not know His family. Where could it be? I will remark on this later.
Galilee was not the favoured place for Joseph and Mary, as the angel of the Lord advised them to live at Galilee, and not to return to Judea where their families lived. Matt. 2:22
Our Lord preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath day and the many people who listened to Him were troubled, saying how did He accumulate all this knowledge? He attained the knowledge from the Bible, and not from Galilee or Judea. Isn’t He the son of the carpenter, the son of Mary? Notice that Joseph is not mentioned, as he died early in Jesus’ life. There was little faith in Galilee and only a few people were healed due to their unbelief. They could not fault Him, powerless to correct Him.
The last mention in the New Testament of the boy Jesus is found in Luke 2:52, which simply states: ‘And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. ’
Then followed an 18 years silence in the life of Christ, and the New Testament is totally silent about the activities and whereabouts of the growing Messiah. Most people think that Jesus lived in the town of Nazareth, working as a carpenter until He commenced His ministry at the age of 30. However, in the New Testament there are a number of occasions that make us think - did He really become an adult at Galilee?
Notice Luke 4:16-22 has a similar message to Mark:
‘So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. . . And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. . . So all bore witness to Him, and marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, is this not Joseph's son?’
There are a couple of things that stand out here.
Notice the expression, ‘where was He brought up,’ asking where Jesus did spend His tender teens, and obviously they were not in Nazareth, He moved from there. Obviously, He did not live there for some time. This

impression is reinforced by the question His hearers ask in the synagogue: ‘Is this not Joseph's son?’ - Almost as if they were in doubt regarding His identity. The same incident is also recorded in Matthew, 13:55-56 with the added questions posed by the synagogue worshippers as: ‘Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?’ Clearly, the theologians were dumbfounded, unfamiliar with Jesus teachings, or the source of His information! He was a total stranger and the people could not even refer to Him by name, but only by His relationship to the other members of His family whom they knew. ‘Where then did this man get all these things’ clearly indicates that Christ did not receive His knowledge in the town of Nazareth!

There is some secrecy and I think Joseph of Arimathea holds the key. Arimathea was 8 miles north of
Jerusalem. Matthew 27:57 tells us that Joseph of Arimathea was rich, while Mark 15:43 and Luke23:50-51 tell us that he was an honourable counsellor or member of the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem. Even though during Jesus' life he remained a secret disciple, Palestinian tradition maintains all through the centuries, he was an uncle of Jesus Christ.

This tradition is evidently well founded, and for a reason Joseph of Arimathea had the audacity to approach Pontius Pilate, Matt. 27:57-60 and ask him for the body of Jesus. It was entrusted to him, known to be a direct family member. He placed the body of Christ within his own rock-hewn tomb. Both the Jewish and Roman law says it was the duty of the nearest relatives to provide a burial for anyone, regardless of how they died.

According to the Talmud, Joseph of Arimathea was the younger brother of the father of Mary. By all evidence, Joseph the stepfather of Jesus, died when Jesus was a child, or in his teens. Under Jewish law, upon the death of a husband, the wife and children are placed in the custody of the next male kin of the husband. Therefore, very early in Jesus’ life, Joseph became the guardian of Mary and Jesus. We are familiar with this setup in the Book Ruth.

Modern Christians support the idea that Jesus was born and raised in Judea and Galilee, experiencing a tedious life in poverty and obscurity. No, Jesus had access to education and conversed with affluent families of his time.

Throughout Jesus' childhood, we have no biblical record of his life. As such, we must look to the wealth of information outside of the biblical canon. There is a vast wealth of information written by the Culdee Christians in Britain and Wales. They were the converts of Joseph of Arimathea and, as we will notice later, they became the early protectors of the Christian Church in Britain and also in Rome. Indeed, Joseph of Arimathea was our Saviour's uncle. Tradition says Joseph was known as ‘Nobilis Decurio’, a Roman appointed as a minister of the mines. It was his responsibility to guarantee the supplies of many metals to a vast Roman Empire. He imported tin from mines which he owned in Cornwall. Naturally, he would have visited Cornwall frequently with his special

guest, Jesus. Remember that Ezekiel mentioned both tin and lead, and they were mined in Britain in those days. As a boy, Jesus must have enjoyed His many voyages. If our Lord was snubbed in Judea and Galilee, then where was He accepted? The likelihood is at Glastonbury in the heart of England. It was His school, and they were not the theological seminaries at Jerusalem or Galilee
. Jesus surprised the religious leaders in the synagogue when He spoke with such authority. Academic people use sound evidence (references) to support their arguments, and our Lord had none except the Scriptures. They had no idea how to tackle His authority, and it frustrated them immensely. They overlooked the special privileges Jesus had via Joseph of Arimathea, His uncle.
Our Lord named Himself a prophet, saying a prophet is honoured everywhere except in his own hometown or amongst his own family. A prophet is a mouthpiece of God. We can read between the dotted lines. Jesus was not honoured in either Judea or Galilee, but He was honoured by people on one of His many voyages. Even His own family members snubbed Him. Our Lord went somewhere, to a people who had no idea who His family was, and the Bible gives us no clue, but I suspect the people to be the 10 lost tribes of Israel in the United Kingdom, and they were attracted to His teachings like a magnet. The woman who came from nowhere (Mark 5) does direct our thoughts to them, as she was healed instead of Jairus' daughter (Judea). Our Lord did a few miracles, and the reason was the people refused Him.
The British People's Role in Early Christianity
The British people played a much larger role in Christianity and in the early Church than most people are aware of. They have the historical claim to the first Church building above ground, as well as to being the first people to proclaim themselves a Christian nation, almost two centuries before Rome.
Jesus as a 'Stranger' in Galilee
This is sucked from my thumb, as we have many reasons to believe He left Galilee for a long period, and the Bible does speak of this.
The reasons given are:

1. Luke 1:36 tells us that Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was a cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. There was a very close, friendly relation between the two families; for immediately after Mary was told by the angel that she was to bear Jesus, she went to the home of her cousin Elizabeth and stayed in Elizabeth's home for about three months (Luke 1:39–56). It is only natural that this close friendship would endure through the years thereafter.
2. The families of Jesus and of John the Baptist had to meet frequently at Jerusalem for its three yearly festivals; and being such good friends, they surely must have met often as children. Somehow, there is a gap between Jesus' 12th and 30th years, when Jesus lost contact with John the Baptist. In John 1:29–33, we have the record of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, in these words: 'I knew Him not.' If John the Baptist had seen his cousin Jesus, he certainly would have recognised Jesus, and if Jesus had been in Palestine during the

last 18 years, John would surely have known Him. They were total strangers and did not know each other.

3. But this is not the only evidence of Jesus' absence, for He was required to pay the Strangers' Tax (Matt. 17:24–27). When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the tax (tribute money) ?” Peter replied ‘yes’, and when Peter came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first. ‘What do you think, Peter? From whom do earthly kings collect tolls or taxes—from their sons or from foreigners?’ “From foreigners,” Peter replied. Jesus told him to throw a hook in the sea, and the first fish that comes up—and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater.
4. Here is clear proof that Jesus was regarded as a stranger in the land; and remember that this took place at Capernaum, in His home district of Galilee. First, note the tax (tribute money) which He was called upon to pay: the drachma is the head-tax levied by the Romans on all strangers. The drachma is a Greek silver coin, and in no way was it the Jewish Temple Tax of a half-shekel, paid by all who were of the Jewish religion. Merely to ask if He paid the Temple Tax would have been an insult, as doubting His citizenship. Also, if this tax had been the Temple Tax, it would not have been levied on any alien, but only on the Jews. Therefore, logic tells us it was the Roman drachma head-tax, levied only upon strangers. Matthew 17:24 is translated so differently by the many translators, spoon-feeding us and making us believe it was the Temple Tax. Erroneously, they maintain it is the Temple Tax, and the money was not the Greek drachma, but half a shekel (Jewish money). Also, notice how Jesus said how to pay it. A fish would be caught, having in its mouth a stater, which was another Greek coin; the Jewish Temple Tax could only be paid with a Jewish half-shekel coin, not a coin issued by the pagans. Again, Jesus spoke of ‘the kings of the earth’ collecting the tax; while the Temple Tax was collected by the priests only, and not by a king. If Jesus had left the country for such a long time, He was regarded as a stranger in His own home district of Galilee. He was not recognised as a local resident, and was asked to pay the strangers' tax, the drachma.
5. The Bible reports that governments only taxed foreigners living under their control, and the general population were exempt. It is different today, as many countries are taxed heavily to accommodate the foreigners. Even Jesus chased the bankers’ money changers out of the Temple and overthrew their tables. The reason is the priests did not accept the Greek drachma and stater coins, considered to be pagan money. They only dealt with the shekel, and thus the money changers. Almost all Bible commentators say Jesus paid the Temple Tax to sidestep the real issue of His identity. The Pharisees wished to trap Jesus and posed the question: ‘Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, or not?’ (Matt. 22:17). In those days, ‘tribute’ was not income tax but implied that the Palestinian State was defeated by the Roman army and they had

to pay the tribute tax. The Lord answered why they wanted to put Him to the test. He simply asked them to show Him the coin of the tribute, on which was engraved the image of Caesar. Then He said to them: ‘Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.’ Thus, Temple Tax could not be paid with a coin with an engraved Caesar.

6. Since Jesus was esteemed a foreigner, He had to pay tax. Our Lord did not want to offend them and told Peter to throw a hook in the waters, and the first fish he caught, he would find a stater. They would obey the rules of the country. The fish and the sea reflect the countries He went to. The fish is a symbol of the Church, and in the sea we find the Gentile nations or the 10 lost tribes of Israel. From them the fish (Church) will be harvested. The sea will guide them ‘west’ to the lands bordering the west coast where the 10 lost tribes of Israel settled. In Hebrew, the word ‘sea’ is also translated as west.
7. Peter too was deemed a foreigner, and he depicts the believing Jewish nations in our dispensation. He denied the Lord before Jesus’ crucifixion, as did Thomas, who refused Him after the resurrection. The Apostle Paul says a person is a Jew who is one inwardly (Rom. 2:29). We are one with Christ, and thus we are all deemed to be Jews. In this instance, Peter too was affiliated to our Lord and was regarded as a stranger, paying his taxes. Our Lord did not want to waste time quibbling about the taxes.
8. There is yet another incident in the New Testament indicating that Jesus was absent from His homeland for a considerable period of time. In the book of John, we read the following:
9. ‘Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. "' (John 1:45–48). Nathanael lived in Cana of Galilee, which is located about five miles from the city of Nazareth. If Jesus had been living at Nazareth during His youth—some 18 years—it seems very strange that Nathanael would not have known Him. Both Nathanael and Philip should have been acquainted with Jesus' command of the Scriptures—it would have been known far and wide! Not only that, but would the very Son of God have no effect upon the community in which He supposedly lived for 18 years? The implication can only be that Jesus had not been in Palestine for a long period of time.

Mark 6:7–13:

The Sending of the Twelve

And He called unto Him the twelve and began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power over the unclean spirits. And He commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey except a

staff only: no provision bag, no bread, no money in their purse; but be shod with sandals and not put on two coats. And He said unto them, "In whatever place ye enter into a house, there abide until ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear you, when ye depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet in testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." And they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many that were sick, and they were healed.

Our Lord mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened shortly after Christ's resurrection, and it will again be bulldozed to the ground a second time, as prophesied on the Day of the Lord. Similarly, Galilee will also be judged, and today the first judgement is obvious, but at the end of Daniel's 70th week, Galilee will also be plundered to be levelled to the ground. When our Lord addressed the disciples—their mission—He reflected our time of grace, and also the events before and after the Day of the Lord. The disciples had a peculiar message, and somehow they are tied to the 144,000 servants who will proclaim God's message during the 33 years of the great tribulation. That may be the reason why the 70 disciples are mentioned in Luke 10, as they will spread the Gospel to the 70 nations of the world. In Luke 10, it says before the 70 disciples went forth, Jesus informed them what to expect in their journeys. They were to expect sufferings: v. 3, 'I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves.' Many will reject their message: v. 10, 'Into whatever city you enter, and they receive you not.' Those men who resembled wolves would ill-treat the lambs of Christ. They could expect that many would receive them, and they would be kind to them. Others would frown on them, and their negative spirit would cast them down, but not utterly. They were to carry no provision nor clothes with them, but needed to trust God's promise to provide for them: v. 4, 'Carry neither purse, nor bag, nor shoes.' Missionaries who lived after Christ's ascension thankfully received gifts from their converts before they set out to teach heathen nations. It is our duty as Christians to provide for the needs of the missionaries. They had to be swift in delivering their message, and to lose no time in useless activities: 'Salute no man by the way.' They were to pronounce blessings on everyone who received them, saying, 'Peace be unto you.' Stay with the family that accepts you. Eat and drink whatever they offer you. After all, the worker deserves his pay. They confirmed the truth of their message by healing the sick. They were to warn their enemies by shaking off the dust from their feet in departing from their city. They are doomed to die. He sent them two by two, with no money or any supplies. They would perform many miracles, as during the early Church's history (Book of Acts), and we can expect the same miracles to happen again.

They had power over the demons, and as proof in the early Church history, the Celtic cult was banished to the coastal fringes of Western Europe. The Gospel was preached throughout the world and generally accepted to find a 'foothold' wherever the sons of Jacob settled. From many countries, it disappeared like water from a duck's feathers. The Gospel established itself in the West and especially in Great Britain.

During the time of our Lord, there were a few who received Him: the woman of Tyre, the weeping sinner, and the sorrowful father who cried, ‘Help my unbelief,’ but during the 33 years preceding Armageddon, the message will be accompanied by great results! I admire the many missionaries who left everything to preach the Gospel, but after the rapture of the Church, we can expect a new tide of missionaries to reach the four corners of the world. They are part of the 144,000 elect. Sodom and Gomorrah were not familiar with the Gospel, but the people who refuse the Gospel will be punished more severely. Sodom spells danger, and Flavius Josephus frequently mentioned Sodom. It epitomises the final judgement of God. The history of Sodom and Gomorrah is complex and short, and it is shared many times in the Bible—a concrete evidence that God will judge our world. It focuses on Jerusalem but also involves all the other nations of the world. It has both a good and a bad aspect. The good is that a remnant will survive, as Lot did, and the bad is that the people who refuse God’s message will be punished. The history is complex, and we need the Bible to interpret itself. I will refer to the passages wherever Sodom and Gomorrah is mentioned.

- Deuteronomy 29:21–25: This passage asks why God is so angered. The reason is that Israel abandoned the covenant the Lord made with them. On the Day of the Lord, Jerusalem will be compared to Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Deuteronomy 32:32–36: Their grapes are filled with the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras. This judgement will befall Israel, in line with the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Isaiah 1:9–10: The small remnant to finally survive the Day of the Lord is likened to Lot surviving Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Isaiah 3:8, 9: Unashamedly, Israel parades their wickedness in full swing of the public (like on carnival day), and they don’t even shy away or even try to hide it. The audacity the men had towards the messengers of God at Sodom highlighted their immorality.
- Isaiah 13:19: Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. This chapter concerns Babylon, and its judgement is still pending. Sodom and Gomorrah is mentioned three times in the Book of Isaiah and three times in the Book of Jeremiah.
- Jeremiah 23:14: On the Day of the Lord, Israel will be devastated as Sodom and Gomorrah. However, God will allow it to be rebuilt by a new and reborn Israel, but Babylon will never be rebuilt again.
- Jeremiah 49:18: This is a prophecy concerning Edom, and verse 17 says no one will live there, as for them no place is found. After the great tribulation and throughout the Millennium, no one will live there, and no peace will be found there.
- Jeremiah 50:39, 40: Babylon will be desolate and abandoned throughout the Millennium.
- Lamentations 4:6: Most commentators think Lamentations only reflects a period immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, but it is prophetic. The destruction was not only schemed by the king of Babylon but also by God. God’s hand caused this

chastisement, and during the time of Jeremiah, Jerusalem was destroyed and that city was burned, comparing it to a fire descending from heaven.

- Ezekiel 16:46, 48: Your elder sister is Samaria (ten tribes), who dwells with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister (Judah), who dwells to the south of you, is Sodom and her daughters. The sister in the south is Judah, and Ezekiel named them as Sodom. The Bible often speaks of Edom (as in Obadiah), but in reality, He addresses the nation of Israel. God regards an unbelieving Jacob as Esau (Edom) or as Sodom and Gomorrah. Ezekiel said frequently that Sodom is proud and arrogant, but indirectly he meant Jerusalem. In the future, they will repent.
- Amos 4:11: With the Babylonian Captivity, God did allow a remnant to escape Jerusalem to later return to Israel, and despite their many sufferings, they did not repent. They were like Lot who escaped Sodom and Gomorrah, or like a charred stick plucked out from a fire, but once they returned from exile, they followed their old ways. The great tribulation will destroy the unbelieving people who refuse to repent.
- Zephaniah 2:9: The forefather of both the Moabites and the Ammonites was Lot, and he escaped the fury of Sodom. This verse says that Lot did escape Sodom and Gomorrah, but his unbelieving descendants who inhabit Moab and Ammon will be punished. On the Day of the Lord, there will be a remnant from Israel who will plunder the unbelieving people living in Ammon and Moab. It will remain a wasteland, as Babylon. Moab and Ammon are located east of the Dead Sea, and that is where the children of Lot settled.
- Matthew 10:15: Any city that denounces the Gospel will not escape the fury of the great tribulation or Armageddon.
- Matthew 11:22–24: The place of death is lower than the Dead Sea, and our Lord argues that if the miracles He did happened in view of the wicked people at Sodom, they would have repented. He promised even Sodom will be better off on judgement day than any of them. Our Lord named three cities, and He resided a long time at Capernaum, living there. Tyre and Sidon will be better off than Capernaum.
- Mark 6:11: This is similar to the history in the Book of Matthew.
- Luke 10:12: Once Israel repents, they will have the 144,000 elect to spread the message of Christ during the last 33 years of the great tribulation leading to the Millennium. If they disregard their message, then it will be easier for Sodom than for the people who reject Christ.
- Luke 17:26–29: This passage is very similar to Matthew 24, and it embraces a time when the Son of Man returns; it will be likened to the time before the deluge of Noah. During the days of Lot, the people went about their daily business until the morning when Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulphur rained down from heaven, but in the days of Noah, it rained water. Before the Millennium, Babylon will burn in a similar fashion as Sodom, and throughout the

Millennium, the people will stand in awe, reflecting on the history of the once-great city.

- Romans 9:29: This verse refers to the Book of Isaiah. There will always be a remnant, and they will be delivered.
- 2 Peter 2:4–9: Both Peter and Jude cite the history of Sodom and Gomorrah and ask why the city was destroyed, and what is the message? ‘So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment’ (2 Peter 2:9). Jude has a very similar chain of thought, encouraging the people to repent. We can trust God, and He established a time, but in the meantime, we need to wait. As an example, Peter says God did not even spare the angels who sinned, and presently they are chained in Tartarus, in the gloomy pits of darkness, where they are being held until the Day of Judgment.
- Jude 6: Agrees with the words of 2 Peter 2, saying that the angels who did not hold to their old position of authority but left their proper dwelling are kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day. Peter says the fallen angels are in Tartarus, and Jude says they are in gloomy darkness. Jude spoke of the eternal fire, suggesting the fire burns until everything is consumed. Today, Sodom and Gomorrah is not burning, but the fire that descended from heaven is eternal, burning until no trace of Sodom is found.
- Revelation 11:8: The bodies of the two witnesses (Moses and Elijah) will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, and there our Lord was also crucified.

This is a drawn-out account of two witnesses who will preach Christ after the rapture of the Church. At the end of the first 3½ years of the great tribulation, the men of Jerusalem will kill the two men. The men of Sodom wanted to kill the two angels who rescued Lot, and history will repeat itself. Great fury is expected after they kill the two men. The history of Sodom and Gomorrah will be repeated at Jerusalem, and typologically, they are deemed as Sodom. Egypt is mentioned as their army disappeared in the Red Sea.

The message is clear, and the people had to repent. If they refuse Christ, then they will surely die. God’s kingdom is on the doorstep, and there will be no escape. Our works of the law will not suffice, as only a personal relationship with the resurrected Christ will determine our fate. Don’t be fooled: Jerusalem will be judged again as in the past. After the rapture of the Church, Satan will descend to earth accompanied by his many angels. Then the people need to repent, as after the Day of the Lord, Christ's kingdom will commence at Jerusalem, and Satan and his angels will not prevail against them. Then the battle against Satan and his angels will be more intense; they will not hide in heaven but will be physically experienced on earth. The many demons and the powers of Satan will be crushed. I don’t believe that the pouring of the oil should be taken too literally, but rather figuratively. The oil is the working of the Holy Spirit,

and the same message applies to the great tribulation. They are metaphors. The Holy Spirit cannot be contained.

Oil is widely understood to be a symbol of the Holy Spirit and requires no detailed explanation, but one Scripture will suffice to link the Holy Spirit with the oil: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed’ (Luke 4:18). The Spirit of the Lord and the oil of anointing are directly linked. The Holy Spirit is not located inside of anything—like pouring water in a jar or something—the Holy Spirit is first of all infinite. You cannot get an ‘infinite’ into finite space. It cannot be contained in a ‘jar of oil’. The properties of the oil reflect the healing properties of the Spirit.

The same is true in the practice of laying your hands on someone (1 Tim. 5:22). Undoubtedly, the laying on of hands in the early church was a means of connecting the message with the messenger, or the spiritual gift with the gifted giver. There are no magical biblical formulas for the ministry of the Church. Laying on of hands has no power in itself. Laying on of hands is only used by God when it is done in agreement with God's Word.

James too addresses the practical stuff regarding a Christian life. James zeroes in on the reality of sickness. Christians, just like anybody else, do get sick. So what do we do when we get sick? He says: ‘Is anyone of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord’ (James 5:13–14). Lots of Christians stumble when they read this. Our bodies are mortal and open to decay. When we study the first verse of this letter, it says it is addressed to the 12 tribes of Israel. It has a special message for reborn Israel after the Day of the Lord, when all the 12 tribes of Israel will be gathered together. There is a 33-year period before Armageddon. The 144,000 elect (12 x 12,000) will have an enormous task to spread the Gospel to the four corners of the world, and I believe no sickness will impede them. Thus, this special message from James. On the quiet, God does heal us today, but it is not meant to be broadcasted.

Verse 13 is tied to verse 30, and the disciples were asked what they did, and did they learn anything? It was a learning curve for them. Why do we need to learn—it had a prophetic insinuation, as later the apostles had to preach the Gospel and the eminent judgement. The preaching commenced in Acts 2 when they told the people to repent, and many demons were cast out. Then the working of the evil spirits was plentiful, but they were defeated. Wherever the Gospel is brought, the dragons were defeated. The Celtic people were delivered from the demons, and the sick were healed. The light in the world will go out, but not everywhere.

Our Lord went to the outcasts, to the parts of the country which were mostly neglected—not the Galilee of the Jews, but the Galilee of the Gentiles, where little was known of the worship of the Temple, where people's minds were enveloped in darkness. Isaiah 9:1–3 spoke of the

darkness in which people walked. The light appeared (Jesus Christ appeared), and it seemed as if after His death and resurrection, everything went dark again. But in the Galilee of the Gentile nations (Zebulun) and for those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine (Matt. 4:16). Everything seemed to go dark again, but in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (10 lost tribes of Israel), a shimmer of hope or light appeared. There the light of the Gospel will never be quenched. Jesus said the world will trouble you (John 16:33). Suddenly, in the midst of this darkness, comes deliverance and joy, the future glory of Galilee (Gauls). The extreme devastation the 10 lost tribes of Israel experienced by the Assyrian invasion will open the way to a bright glory. The gloom and distress of the northern kingdom was due to a divine discipline. Their darkness and distress were real. Isaiah continued to prophesy that Zebulun and Naphtali would be honoured by the way of the sea. The way of the sea was an expression that referred to the western shore of the Mediterranean Sea, reaching to the western fringes of Europe. It became a major area of Christ's ministry where the light will never be dimmed. The people were in darkness (Isa. 8:22) and in the shadow of death, comparable to the demon-possessed person in the previous chapter. We will rejoice because the Lord did free us. After the Assyrian captivity, Isaiah prophesied that the 10 lost tribes of Israel will rejoice. They will rejoice like a people rejoice at the harvest time, and it is like warriors dividing the plunder (Isa. 9:3). Joy is mentioned 24 times in the Book of Isaiah. To the Lord, the 10 lost tribes of Israel were a ray of hope.

Mark 6:14–29:
The Death of John the Baptist And King Herod heard of Him (for His name was spread abroad), and he said, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and therefore virtues operate in Him." Others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is the prophet or one of the prophets." But when Herod heard of it, he said, "This is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead." For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife, for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." Therefore, Herodias had a quarrel against him and would have killed him, but she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and respected him; and when he heard him, he did many things and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his princes and tribunes and to the principal people of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias came in and danced and pleased Herod and those that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it unto thee." And he swore unto her, "Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it unto thee, unto the half of my kingdom." And she went forth and said unto her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." And she came in with haste unto the king and asked, saying, "I will that thou give me immediately in a platter the head of John the Baptist." And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake and for the sakes of those who sat with him, he would not reject her.

And straightway the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought, and he went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head in a platter and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

The history of John the Baptist is also mentioned by a Jewish historian called Flavius Josephus (37–100 AD). He was a prolific writer who was born shortly after Christ's resurrection, and he portrays John the Baptist as having a more powerful influence on the majority of the people of his time than Jesus. Josephus' description of John the Baptist is more detailed than his account of Jesus. Herod Antipas thought that Jesus was the reincarnation of John the Baptist, but the same Herod refused to later believe that our Lord was resurrected from the dead. Herod had no issues with John the Baptist.

Josephus aired the view of the people that the destruction of Jerusalem (68–70 AD) was a divine punishment against the Jews and their leader Herod Antipas, who vetoed the execution of John the Baptist. The strongest argument for the authenticity of Josephus is that his writings are not connected to Christian interpretations.

Herodias did become the wife of Herod Antipas, and she masterminded the beheading of John the Baptist. Herod Antipas is called Herod in the New Testament, and Herod Philip is called Philip in the New Testament (Luke 3:1). Herod Philip was married to Herodias, but she divorced him. Herod Antipas had an affair with his brother's wife when the two brothers met at Rome. Herod Antipas’ first wife was the daughter of King Aretas from Petra. Therefore, when John the Baptist told Herod Antipas that he was sinning, he did not like the message. Herod and Herodias were both family names stemming from the Greek word 'heroes', meaning a hero or warrior.

Josephus tells us that the young woman who danced before Herod was Salome. She was Herodias' daughter and later married into the royal family. In Herod’s family tree, there were lots of marriages involving close blood relatives.

The former wife of Herod Antipas, the daughter of Aretas, noticed almost immediately the preparations Antipas made to divorce her. She asked to be sent to Machaerus, which bordered Aretas' kingdom (her father’s kingdom), while Herod Antipas suspected nothing. Some generals helped her with her travels to Arabia. She met her father and told him of Herod's intentions. The quarrels between King Aretas and Herod Antipas ended in a war in which Herod was defeated. The war happened after our Lord’s crucifixion.

Luke states that a group of Pharisees warned Jesus that Antipas was plotting his death, whereupon Jesus denounced Herod as a ‘fox’ and declared that He, Jesus, would not fall victim to such a plot, as He would not perish outside Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city famous for killing its prophets, who stoned God’s messengers (Luke 13:31–35). Luke also credits Herod’s involvement in Jesus' trial. According to Luke, Pilate, on learning that Jesus was a Galilean and therefore under Herod's jurisdiction, sent Him to Antipas, who was also in Jerusalem at the time. Initially,

Antipas was pleased to see Jesus, hoping to see Him perform some miracle, but when Jesus remained silent in the face of questioning, Antipas mocked Him and sent Him back to Pilate. Luke says that these events improved relations between Pilate and Herod despite their earlier enmity. Legend tells us that Antipas was accused and was sent into exile at Gaul, accompanied there by Herodias and Pontius Pilate. The Celtic people determined their fate.

It confused Herod when Jesus sent His disciples to preach to the crowds. He thought John the Baptist was answerable. He killed him, and is he now resurrected to cause this disturbance? He captured John the Baptist as he annoyed him immensely, saying it is not lawful for him to marry his brother's wife. He would have killed him, but he was too frightened, knowing he would cause a stir amongst the people. Herod had to keep the crowds happy, and if he failed, he would have been either killed or sent to Lugdunum, known today as Lyon in France, a hideaway for the Celtic people. Once you have too much power and do as you wish, then all sound reasoning seems to escape via the back door, and you become mad like Herod and Pilate. Herod wanted to kill him via a third party but refrained from doing this. Deep inside, he feared John the Baptist, and he respected him, as we fear God today. He often listened to John the Baptist, as the Apostle Paul was frequently visited by dignitaries. When Agrippa heard about Paul, he wanted to hear him. As Herod Antipas, Agrippa wanted to listen to the Apostle Paul, not to believe in him or Christ, but to be entertained by him. In the Book of Acts, Agrippa wanted to be entertained by Paul, thinking he would stimulate his mind. They had no televisions. In Acts 25 and 26, we read that the Apostle Paul had a great audience: the king, queen, governor, and the leading Roman officials. Paul entered the palace of Caesarea in chains, and in these chapters we find the most exhaustive defence of all of Paul's records in the Book of Acts. What was the response of the elite? Festus interrupted Paul, saying 'you are out of your mind.' What was the response of Agrippa? He realised a 'yes' forced him to believe in Jesus Christ, and a 'no' would imply he does not believe in the prophets. What are politicians renowned for? To sit on the fence. Paul had a similar experience when he testified before the previous governor Felix. In Acts 24:25, we read, 'As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, which is judgment by the Lord Jesus Christ, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. "' So Felix put a stop to the convincing sermon made by Paul. Tragically, neither Agrippa nor anyone with him believed Paul's message. When Paul addressed the Areopagus (Acts 17:22), we are told some people did believe, but later no one believed. The Gospel seemed foolishness to them.

Herod Antipas convened a feast day, and it may have been his birthday or the day when he was crowned. The daughter of Herodias and Philip danced to the delight of King Herod, and he must have been drunk too much when he made unrealistic promises. He promised to fulfil her dreams, and it ended with the death of John the Baptist. I am sure she (Salome) was very young, as she went to her mother for advice.

Mark 6:30–44:
The Feeding of the Five Thousand
And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus and told Him everything they had done and what they had taught. And He said unto them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And many saw them departing and knew Him and ran there afoot out of the cities and arrived before them and came together unto Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and had mercy on them because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and He began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him and said, "This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed; send them away that they may go into the country round about and into the villages and buy themselves bread, for they have nothing to eat.” He answered and said unto them, "Give ye them to eat.” And they said unto Him, "Shall we go and buy bread for two hundred denarii and give them to eat?" He said unto them, "How many loaves have ye? Go and see.” And when they knew, they said, "Five, and two fishes.” And He commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to His disciples to set before them, and the two fishes He divided among them all. And they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments and of the fishes. And those that ate were five thousand men.
We can skip the history of John the Baptist and continue from Mark 6:13: ‘They cast out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.’ It is perfectly tied to verse 30 when it says that the apostles gathered around Jesus and told Him everything they had done and taught. In this chapter, the complete history of John the Baptist reflects our dispensation of grace. John the Baptist was deemed dead, and similarly today the risen Christ is also deemed as dead to our world. It is not a physical death but a spiritual one. Today we often hear that God is dead, as the world does not reckon Him. If we do not commune with a person, then they are deemed as dead to us. John the Baptist depicted our Lord’s first coming to earth, and in the future, Elijah will depict our Lord’s second coming to earth. Officially, John the Baptist is rejected by the Jewish nations and the Sanhedrin, and politically he was executed by Herod Antipas. History repeated itself after the resurrection of Christ, when Herod Agrippa persecuted many believers and he killed the Apostle James (John’s brother) with a sword. He also arrested Peter (Acts 12:1–3). Both the Sanhedrin, the Jewish nation, and the political leaders refused the message of Christ. They preferred the darkness to the light, and during the past 2,000 years, the history of the world was disastrous. The light came and went, and the people think the ‘law’ can substitute the saving grace of Christ, but the law is nothing short of a sham. The Jewish nations and the many religious leaders are fooled, and the law has no footing, as the petrodollar today. The only footing we have is our salvation in Christ.

We have this change inside of us. The Apostle Peter says we have the surest word of the prophets inside of us, and we will do well if we take heed to it, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until He appears (2 Peter 1:19). The dark place is our heart, but now the true light of the Gospel brightens it.

The history of John the Baptist is mere symbolism, and everything is written retrospectively. The framework of John's death is absorbed in the message of the Apostles. Our Lord may be dead to the world, but His message will echo on earth. The history of John the Baptist is tied to the message of Christ, as he was the forerunner of our Lord. John the Baptist was buried in an unknown grave, and similarly our Lord, as we do not know where Golgotha—His grave—is. Mind you—He resurrected, but not John the Baptist.

While Jesus was speaking to His disciples, they quietly slipped away and went to the town of Bethsaida (Luke 9:10). Soon the crowds found out where He was going, and they followed Him. He welcomed them and taught them about the Kingdom of God, and He healed those who were sick. He wanted to draw the crowds away from the cities to the wilderness to rest. When the masses of people were drawn away from the towns to listen to Him, it needs to remind us of the words of the Apostle Paul. Paul wrote we need to go outside the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:13). We too need to lose our identity and go to the mountains. That is our position in Christ, and also the crowds of people who followed our Lord to be in the wilderness. I am also thinking of the future when the believers will physically hide in the mountains of Petra to await the Day of the Lord. It will happen after the rapture of the Church. The Lord will be their shelter and possibly feed them with manna at Petra.

The people who followed our Lord were likened to the lost, like sheep having no shepherd, but in this chapter they wisely chose the Shepherd who is Christ. He taught them, and He gave them to eat. The parallel is to teach and to eat, as the Word of God is the bread of life. When the people of Israel noticed the 'manna', they said to each other, "What is it?" They did not know what it was, and Moses said: "It is the bread that the Lord gave you to eat. . . The people of Israel called it 'what' ('man', mannah) " (Ex. 16:15, 31). Moses literally said this is the Word, this is the bread. We can notice the parallelism. In John 6:29–52, we have the same history of the feeding of the crowds, and then our Lord did comment on the feeding of the crowd: 'For the bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world' (John 6:33). During Moses's lifetime, it was literal, but the true bread today is the Word of God. True life comes via the Word of God, and they are 'the Words' our Lord spoke.

Mark 6:34 says they were like sheep having no shepherd, and the main task of the shepherd is to feed them. The Shepherd began to teach them many things. The great Shepherd taught them, and ultimately it is portrayed by Him feeding them.

In the Old Testament, we have many references to the shepherds. John 10 says He did die for the sheep, but today He gives them life—the once-lost sheep are His main concern. If the shepherd had to only die, he would not benefit the sheep. He never wants to leave them nomadic. The good

Shepherd is the resurrected Christ, and He lives for them eternally. John 10 says the shepherd did die for the sheep, but now He lives for them, feeding them with the ‘manna’ or the Word of God. The task of the dog is to gather the sheep. By nature, the dog loves to herd the sheep, and it is their inherited trait to kill them. The shepherd’s task is to feed them. They will follow the Good Shepherd, as we who are acquainted with His voice. Zechariah 13:7–9 says the sword will strike the Shepherd, and then the sheep will scatter. Fittingly, they wrote the Shepherd in capital letters, as it is also cited by our Lord: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’ (Matt. 26:31). The Lord spoke this at the Lord’s Passover. After the Passover, they went to the Mount of Olives, and there the Lord told them that the Shepherd will be slain, and the sheep or the disciples or the Jewish nation will be scattered. After this, He will guide the little ones, and they are the Church or the remnant of our dispensation, including the dispensations to come. The little ones are also mentioned in Matthew 25:40 & 45, who are the least. They are the people who will serve Him as part of the new covenant. In Matthew 10:42, the Lord sends His disciples or the ‘least’, and they are His disciples. The ‘little ones’ will be gathered by the good Shepherd. When the good Shepherd does appear on the Day of the Lord, then it will be obvious that He accompanies His Church or the ‘once-scattered’ sheep. When the Shepherd is struck, the sheep will scatter, and yet there will be a remnant. The Lord will guide them. In the Book of Zechariah, it says during the great tribulation, two-thirds (2/3) will perish, and one-third will go through the fire. He will refine them as silver is refined, and they will be purified as gold. They will call on His name, and He will hear them: He will say, "It is my people," and they shall say, "The Lord is my God.” During the great tribulation, He will purify them in the desert at Petra, once Jerusalem and Israel are devastated and levelled to the ground, and the turning point will be when they do call on His name. They will stare at His wounds, and they will acknowledge Him. The one-third is the remnant who will survive the great tribulation.

The death of John the Baptist does reflect the death and resurrection of our Lord, the suffering of Israel on the Day of the Lord, and through all the suffering, a few will follow Him. He will care for them; He is the High Priest of those who recognise His voice. He will feed them with the living Word of God, likened to Him feeding the masses.

Apart from the resurrection, the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. Obviously, the Gospel writers considered this a significant miracle. When Christ fed the masses on that day, He began with only five barley loaves and two fishes borrowed from a boy’s lunchbox (John 6:9). Jesus’ disciples wanted to send the people away because the evening was approaching. At this point, the disciples should have recalled the many miracles they had seen Jesus do. Perhaps some of them did, but Andrew asked, ‘What are five loaves and two fishes for so many?’ (John 6:9). Philip exclaimed, "200 pence would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite.” Jesus called for the bread and fish to be brought to Him. He then gave thanks for the meal, broke the bread, and gave it to His disciples to give to the crowd. Amazingly, the entire multitude was fed with that small meal. Jesus provided as much as they

wanted, and they all ate and were satisfied. Christ did not just meet the need; He lavished them with so much food that they had a surplus: 12 baskets full of broken pieces of bread and fish were left over.
It is noteworthy that Jesus fed the people through the agency of His disciples. He could have simply snapped His fingers and caused everyone present to have a meal, but He didn't. Instead, He gave it to His disciples to distribute it to the people. In this way, the disciples had to trust the Lord for everything they gave. On the day of Pentecost, they preached the Gospel to us, giving to us the true bread of life.
Andrew doubted what good they were going to do with only five loaves and two fish. There is a foreshadowing of Christ's miracle in the life of Elisha in 2 Kings 4. Elisha told his servant to feed the people who were gathered there, although there was not enough food for the 100 men. One of the men said, "How can I set this before 100 men?" In the end, the men not only had enough to eat, but they ate and had some left. He says He will do more than provide for His people; He will give them abundantly. Ps. 132:15. We need to entrust our lives to God and, when we do, expect God to do a far greater work inside of us, greater than we ever imagined. Eph. 3:20.
Numerology plays a big part in this chapter. They were commanded to sit in groups of 50 or 100 men, and the only food they had were the five loaves and the two fish.
It fed 5,000 men, and they had a surplus of 12 baskets of food.
• 2 – The letter is tied to the firstborn right of the Church. With Christ's resurrection from the dead, two men stood at His grave, and later that afternoon, He joined two people walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. We, as part of the Church, are the 'breach' in God's salvation plan. At the moment when Joseph was thrown in a pit, everything seemed to go quiet. Unknowingly, during the following 20 years, Joseph was blessed immensely, and his family were totally unaware of this. The great surprise was in Egypt, and their emotional encounter pictures Israel's repentance on the Day of the Lord. Joseph, who lived for 20 years in Egypt, relays the history of the Church that went unnoticed, and his firstborn right was tied to his name, making him a ruler with Pharaoh.
• 5 – Is the number of grace, and presently we live in the fifth dispensation. It has to do with the calling of the Church. There are so many examples. David picked up five smooth stones to fight Goliath (1 Sam. 17:40). The holy anointing oil was pure and composed of five parts (Ex. 30:23-25). There were five Palestinian cities. The five on the left (as the left hand) denotes the working of Satan, and the five on the right (the right hand) the working of Christ.
• 12 – The most obvious example of 12 are the 12 tribes of Israel, mentioned many times throughout the Bible. Revelation incorporates the multiple uses of 12. Once the great tribulation begins, Christians will have already been raptured to heaven to spare them the horrors. 144,000 people, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel, will be called to spread the Gospel to the four corners of the world. The New Jerusalem is described as having walls 144 cubits thick, symbolic of the 12 tribes and the 12 Apostles. The foundations of the walls are made of 12 precious stones.

The city is foursquare, with walls 12,000 stadia (or furlongs) long, wide, and high. There are three gates on each side, for 12 total. Inside, the Tree of Life yields 12 different kinds of fruit.
• 100 – Koph means ‘an eye of a needle’. Jesus used an illustration of a camel going through the eye of a needle. It is known as our letter Q, and if it is written correctly, it is like a thread piercing a needle. ‘Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible. ”’ (Mark 10:24-27). It is just as impossible for sinful man to go through to the other side (heaven) as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Jesus said that He alone can make this happen. It is easier for a camel (3) to enter the needle (100) than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. A needle or 100 has to do with entering the kingdom of God, and a camel (3) will not enter the needle (100), as statistically it will be an infinite 33. 3333333. Simply said, a 3 cannot be divided into the 100. The number 100 is to enter the kingdom. As an example, the tabernacle had three entrances, and the first was the gate, and its dimensions were 5 x 20 cubits (100 cubits). The door leading to the sanctuary and the door to the inner sanctuary (that was partitioned by the inner veil) were both 10 x 10 cubits (100). Thus, there were three entrances, and each was 100 cubits square. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. To enter the kingdom, you need to enter the 100. The numbers have a special message, and they depict the immense blessings of God’s Word on our lives or any reborn person or nation on earth. We are blessed exceedingly, and in no way can we fathom this today. It is like the Gentile woman from Sidon, who was blessed by Elijah. During a time of drought, her jar of flour was never empty, and the jug of oil never ran dry (1 Kings 17:16). It portrays our eternal blessings, and it will always be part of us. It is like the woman at the well who tasted the water that will flow forever.
‘But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ (John 4:14). The feeding of the 5,000 men does portray our dispensation, and miraculously each person left gratified. Why the 12 baskets of bread and fish – what is their purpose? The baskets picture the blessings of the believers after the rapture of the Church. They are the people who accepted the message of Christ during the great tribulation. They too will be blessed, and God will provide for them. Thus, the emphasis is on the 12, related to the 12 tribes of Israel. Any person or nation who accepts Christ will be blessed, and they too will feast on the meal.

Mark 6:45-56
45 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and cross over ahead of Him to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd. 46 After bidding them farewell, He went up on the mountain to pray. 47 When evening

came, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and Jesus was alone on land. 48 He could see that the disciples were straining to row, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, 49 but when they saw Him walking on the sea, they cried out, thinking He was a ghost— 50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But Jesus spoke up at once: “Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.” 51 Then He climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. And the disciples were utterly astounded, 52 for they had not understood about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. 53 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret, where they moored the boat. 54 As soon as they got out of the boat, the people recognised Jesus 55 and ran through that whole region, carrying the sick on mats to wherever they heard He was. 56 And wherever He went—villages and towns and countrysides—they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged Him to let them just touch the fringe of His cloak. And all who touched Him were healed.

The comments on Jesus walking on the water vary immensely. Many stumble on simple ethical issues, arguing how they can apply this experience to improve their life. They love to debate if Peter should have remained in the boat. The final message of the commentators is our lack of faith, thus losing the real essence of the story.

Jesus Christ is the main subject of the entire Bible, and Him walking on the water sheds more light on Him alone.

Yes, the entire Scripture is about Him. The complete Old Testament is written to prepare the world for His coming. Isaiah wrote: ‘A voice is calling, clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.’ (Isa. 40:3). The entire Old Testament was looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. Everything was pointing towards Him.

The Gospels, including this history, record the manifestation of the long-awaited Messiah. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29). The Old Testament records the preparation for the Christ. The Gospels record the manifestation of the Christ. The entire Bible is truly about Him.

Once we study Mark 6 in this light, many more truths will surface; once we ask ourselves – what can I learn about Christ and the extension of His kingdom, and not ‘how can I advance myself?’ The miracles our Lord did on earth are to highlight His present work for us during our dispensation. Many Christians are so wrapped up with themselves and their progress, they totally ignore what Christ is doing for us today. Let me explain this passage.

‘Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and cross over ahead of Him to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd.’ The disciples went into the ship, and in this history the Church is tossed about like a ship at sea, and the journey of the Church is perilous: Christ will accompany them, even though the wind and tide are against them. They can weather the storm once they are assured Christ is with them.

It says He bid them farewell, and why did He greet them so politely? If you are saying goodbye to someone you may not see for a long time, thus you

bid them farewell. Figuratively speaking, when our Lord bid them farewell, it is to depict His ascension to heaven.
On Ascension Day, our Lord went to heaven to intercede for us, and it is comparable to Him going to the mountain.
‘After bidding them farewell, He went up on the mountain to pray.’ Today, many Christians believe when Christ ascended into heaven, His work ended for us. His resurrection is not the end. For the past 2,000 years, He is seated on God’s right hand interceding for us. If His offering were not accepted, His death on the cross would have been senseless. He remains true to God, and He can forgive our sins, even cleanse our polluted minds (1 John 1:9). We have a High Priest who is not part of the ‘law’ but He went into the real tabernacle in heaven (Heb. 8:2). Him praying on the mountain (heaven) is to picture Christ interceding for us. He cleanses our consciences to serve the living God (Heb. 9:11-15). When the disciples were struck by fear, Christ appeared miraculously, when the set time had come. He silenced their fears by making Himself known to them. About the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them. The fourth watch is from 3 o’clock in the morning, when the night is at its coldest and darkest. The disciples rowed to the other side of the Lake of Galilee, to Gennesaret. That countryside epitomises the 10 lost tribes of Israel. He made His disciples row for 25–30 stadia (3–4 miles) (John 6:19), and then He met them.
The ship pictures the Church, as we are likened to Noah and his family of eight (1 Pet. 3:20-22). We too need to weather the storm, and the water pictures the heathen nations.
The last pages of our Bible say, ‘The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues’ (Rev. 17:15). The harlot sat on the beast with the 10 heads, mastering the water, to picture the kingdoms before the fall of Armageddon.
The waters could be quiet, but the winds can toss waves at them, measuring up to 120 feet high in the deep sea. In the Bible, Israel is pictured as the land, and the heathen nations are pictured as the sea. In the Book of Revelation, we read of the two beasts. The one beast is from the land (Israel), and the other beast is from the seas (heathen nations). Whenever the 10 lost tribes of Israel or the two tribes of Israel were driven into captivity, then they were swallowed by the waters. With the Day of the Lord, Israel will be saved from the waters, or from the harlot steering the beast on the waters. If any ship sinks, then it disappears beneath the waters. It is an art to keep the ship floating on the waters, as the waves threaten us continually. At times the sea is calm, but we need some ‘wind’ to move the ship, filling its sails.
Can we forget the hour of Christ’s deepest calamity, when Judas betrayed Him, when His friends forsook Him, and when the multitude mocked Him? The Psalms say: ‘The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help.’ (Ps. 18:4-6). The torrents are the waters that drowned Him, making Him descend to the abyss. There needs to be a wind to propel our sailboat, but too much wind can be disastrous. The word for ship is also

translated as ‘oni’ or ‘I’, as we are likened to a ship weathering the tides of life. In this chapter, the ship with the 12 disciples pictures the Church. Our Lord bid them farewell, knowing they would experience many hardships in life, but in Spirit, He would always be with them.
Our eyes of faith need to grasp the pivotal moment when Jesus went into the mountain to pray for us in heaven. We tend to have little faith in what He is doing for us right now. Many ignore His cleansing work for us today, thinking they need to cleanse themselves. Christ works for us today, and it is condensed to the one word – He prays for us.
‘Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.’ (Rom. 8:26).
Many theologians will seize the opportunity, inviting us to attend a college to know how to pray – No! We don’t need the college, as the Spirit inside of us will pray for us, and we cannot hear His words. Later in the chapter, the question is asked: who is the one who will condemn us? Christ is the one who is also raised from the dead (and more than His suffering, it is His resurrection), who is at the right hand of God, interceding (praying) for us (Rom. 8:34). ‘Therefore, He is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them.’ (Heb. 7:25). In the Book of Hebrews, it is the High Priest who prays for us; in Romans 8:34, it is Christ; and in Romans 8:26, it is the Holy Spirit who prays for us. They are all the same! Christ praying on the mountain is Him interceding for us, while the disciples had to fight the storm.
The mountain portrays either the heavens or the kingdoms of the world. Once we grasp this, then the following verse will be so easy to understand. ‘Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do that which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto that mountain, “Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea”; it shall be done.’ (Matt. 21:21). We will reign with Christ and cause the kingdoms of the world to tumble.
His redemption went to the nations of the world, and the Lord retreated to the heavens. With our Lord’s ascension to heaven, He said: ‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’ (Matt. 28:19-20). They saw Him leave, and it is very similar to the occasion when Jesus called His servants, entrusting them with the talents according to their ability. It says: ‘Then he went away.’ (Matt. 25:15). It was their responsibility to trade with the talents.
When it was pitch dark, the ship was in the midst of the water, and He noticed the disciples were in turmoil. The Book of Hebrews 4:13 says, ‘no creature can hide from God. Everything is uncovered and exposed for Him to see.’ The ship is the Church, and the Lord is in heaven, and the believers are on the water fighting the wind. The wind of teaching causes the storm.
Once we are rooted in Christ, ‘then we will no longer be little children, tossed and carried about by all kinds of teachings that change like the wind. We will no longer be influenced by people who use cunning and

clever strategies to lead us astray.' (Eph. 4:14). The winds of teachings are inspired by Satan, and Satan's ambition is to shroud the Gospel, to keep it veiled from those who are perishing. If Satan succeeds, then the god of this world will blind the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel or the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:3-4). The Apostle Paul keeps warning us about the cunning tactics of Satan. The winds of teachings toss the waves, and we need to be diligent, not to allow anyone to captivate us through an empty, deceitful philosophy. Satan's philosophy follows human traditions and the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ (Col. 2:8). The disciples experienced the darkness we experience today; the darkness that hovered over the ship. It depicts the dark ages, and the early reformers did make some light to shine, but quickly the world reverted back to darkness. They failed to adhere to the true message of the Bible, subjecting themselves later to the evil doers and their dogmas.

The disciples noticed a figure walking past the boat, and it happened during the fourth watch. When we calculate the fourth watch to our dispensation, it will be in the year 1500 A. D. , the time of the Church's reformation. God did intervene, and many esteemed men did preach the Word of God, even if they had to be martyred.

The Lord made Himself known, even if they deemed it impossible. With the reformation, the complete Western world was in uproar, and it was pitch dark. Everything seemed to be regulated by the Roman Catholic Church, and the Bible was not available to the mainstream people. During the reformation, things changed, but within one generation everything went awry, and the spirit of the reformation left them. With Luther, the Bible was given to the people, and they started printing it. In 1456, Gutenberg produced the first printed Bible. The Lord did not allow the disciples or the reformers to be overwhelmed by the waters.

The disciples thought He was a ghost, but He assured them He was the great 'I AM', as He said to Moses and Abraham. He calmed them, saying, "Don't be afraid." He climbed into the boat, and the ship was not tossed about. The ship was steady, but not the waters. The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy, first of all, to make supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings for all men; for kings and all that are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity (1 Tim. 2:1-2). The prime reason is us, so we will find rest, and the world at large is not addressed. Today, the West experiences a time of rest, and the reason is the true Church of Christ. Once the Church is gone with the rapture, then the real storm will develop.

He climbed into their ship, and immediately it settled. Our Lord is not involved with the Church's history or with any denomination on earth; no, He cares for each individual believer.

The disciples considered not the miracle of the loaves – they did not remember or call to mind the 'power' which Jesus had shown in feeding the five thousand men, and they should have known He was able to save them from the storm.

We need to study all the Gospels to find the real meaning why Jesus walked on the water. The entire chapter of John 6, vv. 1-69, speaks about

the loaves of bread, and wedged in this story is Jesus walking on the water (6:15-21). This is remarkable, as the miracle of Jesus walking on the water, and the disciples being rescued from the wind and mooring safely at their desired haven, is made nothing of in the rest of this chapter. We have six verses in the middle of chapter 6, and the entire chapter is devoted to the unfolding of the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 men. So that miracle gets a whole chapter of attention and explanation. So John is not telling this miracle as a way of setting the stage for a long dialogue about Jesus' ability to walk on water. Instead, this miracle is embedded in the story of the feeding of the 5,000 men. This miracle, in John's mind, served that story. John's purpose is to blend the story of Jesus walking on the water with the feeding of the 5,000 men.

'For they did not understand about the bread, but their hearts were hardened.' (6:52) – Their 'mind' was too dull to perceive it. This does not mean they were 'opposed' to Jesus, or had what is known today as 'a hardness of heart', but simply they were slow to perceive His power. They did not quickly learn, as they ought to have done. They forgot He had all the power, and therefore He could quieten the storm. The word 'heart' is frequently used in this sense. See Ephesians 1:18, Romans 1:21; 2:15; 2 Corinthians 4:6. If the disciples heeded the message of the loaves, knowing Christ was all-knowing, then they wouldn't have doubted Him. They required the faith of King David, who knew that God would make him king; therefore, he had nothing to lose if he had to fight Goliath. His faith spoke volumes. Their hearts were hardened, having no faith. Early in Jesus' ministry, our Lord assured His disciples they were called to preach His Gospel, so they should have figured it out: nothing would happen to them!

Once they set foot on the other side of Galilee, it seemed as if all the people at Gennesaret were sick, and they merely had to touch the hem of His garment to be healed. In the previous chapter, the woman with the issue of blood got healed when she merely touched the hem of Jesus' garment, and she depicts the 10 lost tribes of Israel. In this chapter, the masses of people are the heathen nations. There will be healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2), and the crowds will be drawn to accomplish God's work. In the New Testament, Gennesaret is from the Greek word that stems from the Hebrew word harp. It was a town in Galilee on the western fringes of the lake. Many assume that Gennesaret (harp) is a name given to it due to the shape of the lake, sketched like a harp? No! They had no aeroplanes to figure this one out. I believe the harp is tied to the word Gennesaret. It is translated from the Hebrew word kinnor (harp). Gennesaret can also be translated as a court of a king. Somehow the harp is tied to the 10 lost tribes of Israel, as the coat of arms for Ireland is the harp.

Mark 7:1-9

Then came together unto Him the Pharisees and some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, 2 who upon seeing some of His disciples eat bread with common, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, condemned them. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews, unless they wash their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 And when they come

from the market, unless they wash, they eat not. And there are many other things which they took upon themselves to hold, such as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and of tables.) 5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do thy disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?” 6 He answered and said unto them, “Well has Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they honour Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.’ 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups, and many other such like things ye do. 9 And He also said unto them, ‘Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. ’”

The Pharisees, namely the teachers of the law, heard a lot about the miracles Jesus did, and they were curious to know what He taught His disciples. Throughout the Gospels, we are given a picture of the disciples, who struggled to understand who Jesus really is. It is easy to gather that many times the disciples had difficulty answering Jesus’s questions, and in their behaviour, they really thought of Jesus as another Rabbi. It took them quite a time to realise that He is God.
So when the Pharisees came around to observe our Lord, I am sure they felt intimidated, and thought that Jesus and the Pharisees and teachers were all of the same authority, thinking perhaps Jesus had to answer to the Pharisees and teachers. Either way, the disciples were face to face with the religious powers of the day.
When our Lord was gathered together with His disciples, the Pharisees and teachers came in, and the first thing on their mind was not to explain the suffering Servant or Jesus as portrayed in the Book of Isaiah? No. It was, ‘Why aren’t your disciples washing their hands?
How is that for priorities? I don’t know, but the Pharisees may have had a problem with dirty hands, which became a big issue and tradition. The Jewish law revolved around cleanliness, but is it really the most important thing Jesus had to teach His disciples?
The Pharisees believed in another law, other than the written Law of Moses, called the ‘oral law’. They believed that the ‘oral law’ was passed down from Moses to Joshua, to the Judges, and finally to be entrusted to the Pharisees, who were reckoned as the keepers of the extra Law. At that time, the ‘oral law’ was what was called ‘the tradition of the elders’, mainly because each Rabbi/teacher of the sect of Pharisees would teach the Oral Law to his students ‘orally’, and finally these teachers of the law kept on adding to them. This ‘oral law’ has now been written down and is available as a book called the ‘Talmud’. You can study the ‘Talmud’, but you will feel intimidated by their refusal of Christ.
The Orthodox Jews we know today, wearing black clothes and hats with beards, live by this ‘oral law’, additionally to the ‘written Law of Moses’. Even today, they do not eat unless they keep to the tradition of washing their hands. The ‘washing of the hands’ is not in the Old Testament. It is not part of God’s law, and there are many similar traditions we will

mention later. I repeat, I don't encourage you to even read the Talmud or to absorb any knowledge of it or their traditions. The Orthodox Jews could be called the Pharisees of the modern era, because they treasure the same traditions. A Rabbi or teacher of the sect of the Pharisees can create a law to be added to the 'oral law', making it a pure tradition. They think they have the authority to make and change the Laws as it pleases them, and not even God or the prophets like Elijah can deter them.
The religious leaders meant elaborate ceremonial washings, not washing for the sake of cleanliness. The Jews of that time adhered strictly to their own laws and had an extensive ritual to wash their hands before a meal, including the wrist. It was purely ceremonial. Firstly, they had to wash their hands to cleanse them, and then perform a ritual to make them spiritually clean. They even had an accompanying prayer to be said during the ritual washing.
Medically speaking, obsessive-compulsive behaviours are rampant today, and many of them have elaborate rituals involving prolonged and frequent hand-washing behaviours. Many of them think their washing rituals are primarily for hygienic reasons, but the true behaviour is to dampen their feelings of distress, anxiety and doubt. Some bathe or shower themselves twice or three times a day. The frequency and intensity of these washes, the use of abrasives or antibacterial soaps, result in dry, reddened and cracked skin, and not to even mention the dangers of chlorine.
Showers are often taken using scalding hot water. Others bathe or shower themselves whenever they return home, in order to maintain a distinction between 'clean zones' (the house) and 'dirty zones' (the outside world).
The Pharisees kept their 'distance' from any common man, having an attitude of 'for I am holier than thou', and their body language articulates a self-righteous man, and it includes any Christians or religious person who strictly observes the rituals of the law. The Pharisees would have no dealings with the Samaritans, but washed themselves whenever they returned from market or any public place, lest they should be defiled with the common people. They avoid them but love to be seen when they stand praying (Matt. 6:5).
People with compulsive behaviour include elaborate rituals to clean their bathroom surfaces, like sinks, toilets and showers. Every day we are bombarded with advertisements selling anti-bacterial products killing 99. 9 per cent of germs. It's not that simple. Scientists are concerned that our obsession with cleanliness will backfire. Germs are part of us, and if we don't have them, we will drop down dead. We have more bacterial cells in our body than our actual cells. Bacteria are needed in so many enzymatic reactions. Allergies and auto-immune disorders are on the rise.
Cleanliness will not help us in our travels. When they do travel, they are often infected by the germs the Third World countries are immune to. Their holiday ends with a usual stomach bug.
The religious leaders instigate rituals that are too burdensome for the common people. The Scribes and Pharisees were upset with Jesus because He allowed His disciples to break away from their traditions by eating with unclean hands. The word translated 'wash' is the Greek word baptizo, or baptise, which means 'to immerse'. Metaphorically, it is to be

overwhelmed with water and not to sprinkle, but to be soaked with water. Thus, the word ‘baptise’ is left untouched as an untranslated word. The Greek term baptizo was simply brought into the English without translation. The final ‘o’ (omega) was dropped for the English ‘e’. To baptise is an outward ritual best understood as our baptism, to be overwhelmed by the water, to rise again. The washing has a greater spiritual truth, namely water baptism.

The Pharisees took ritual cleansings very seriously. For example, at the wedding at Cana that Jesus attended, six stone water jars were present ‘the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons’ (John 2:6). When we tend to hide Jesus’s reluctance to wash His hands when reading this chapter to our children. We teach our children to wash their hands thoroughly, but the Pharisees didn’t wash in order to get rid of the germs. No, they washed them as required by the ‘tradition of the elders’ to foil spiritual defilement. Jesus and His disciples didn’t participate in the ritual at the table that day. The Pharisee could not hide their surprise, and Jesus and His disciples were met with a sharp response.

In the Book of Matthew 15:9-11, we read of the same instance, and our Lord responded.

‘Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.’ Jesus retorts that their practice of cleansing the outside of a cup and dish is just an external issue. Jesus uses cups and dishes as an analogy regarding the Pharisees’ character. They are very concerned with outward purity and observance, but their hearts are full of greed and wickedness. The word translated ‘wickedness’ means robbery, plunder and greediness. Jesus is even more specific about the Pharisees: ‘They devour widows’ houses’ (Mark 12:40), tricking the venerable widows to obtain their property and possessions. Any person who is motivated by greed, or has an inner longing for greater wealth, ends up wanting ‘more’. They have a serious problem.

Rightfully, Jesus named the teachers of the law (Pharisees) hypocrites. He never intended to be their friends, thus the harsh words. He said Isaiah was right when he prophesied about them, saying they ignore God’s law and substitute it with their own traditions. Skilfully, they circumvent God’s law in order to cling to their own man-made traditions. Isaiah 29:11-14 wrote – ‘The entire vision will be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, “When you give it to those who can read, they will say, ‘We can’t read it because it is sealed.’ When they give it to those who cannot read, they will say, ‘We don’t know how to read this. ’” Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words and honour Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition. Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvellously with this people, wondrously marvellous; and the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed. ”’

The prophecies in the book of Isaiah concern the Messiah, and they were not valued, known and understood, both by the priests and the people. They ignored them as if it was never written to the Pharisees, and to the unbelieving world the scrolls were rolled up and sealed. The reason was not the vagueness of Isaiah's writings, but the blindness and stupidity of the people, whose eyes were closed and their heads covered with the skullcap. To them, the prophecies were dull, but not to the others; not to the apostles of Christ, whose eyes were opened to understand the things written concerning Him in the law, the prophets and in the Psalms. The Jewish religious system with the common people did not understand them. They were ignorant of all the prophecies foretelling their own ruin and destruction due to their disbelief (Luke 24:27). The reason is they think the Scripture evolves around their individual lives, and thus they cannot see the wood for the trees, focusing on the smaller details. Thus, they fail to understand the larger salvation plan of Christ via Christ. There are many comparable examples, like treating the symptoms of the disease (fever) and not the disease itself. The people are engrossed with the outside, their image and fame, the wrapping, but not the heart. The Jewish nation was engrossed with the outside, as in the washing of hands. They are left void with the law, missing the true message of the cross. The Scriptures enlighten Christ and not us.

We will again concentrate on our Lord's saying: 'For you set aside the commandment of God, and hold tightly to the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and you do many other such things.' (7:8). Laying aside the commandment of God is not any particular commandment, but it includes all the commandments of God, the whole written law; they sidestepped them to favour their own oral law, or the traditions of the elders. There are endless examples, so many that it is almost impossible to name them all.

We frequently hear that we need to revere Judaism as they are acquainted with the laws of Moses. People assume that Judaism is the religion of Moses, and that Jesus brought a message opposed to the Old Testament. They believe that the New Testament is advocated to the Gentiles and the Old Testament to the Jews or Judaism! It's fabricated. Judaism is NOT the religion of the Old Testament Scriptures. Judaism is plainly and simply the religion of the Jews, a religion manufactured by their own inventiveness. The Jews appropriated the name of Moses as the author of their religion – but in actuality, they did reject Moses. Jesus said: 'Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me. . . but ye believe not his writings.' (John 5:46-47). Judaism is a man-made religion! It is obvious to the most superficial reader of the New Testament that a fundamental difference existed between the teaching of Jesus and the Judaism of that time. The Jews modified God's law and even instituted laws and commandments of their own which opposed the precepts of Moses. In no way will I address the present-day Jewish people as my 'older brother and sister in faith', as the Pope did. Christianity is not blameless. They too developed their own religious arrangements, and when we confront them with the resurrected Christ, then they retort, "I have a religion," and refuse Him; and when we edify them to be baptised, they say they were baptised. The Churches

love to anoint some Christians as saints, to leave a vacuum making as if the other Christians are no saints? Some are appointed as priests, so the other believers are no priests. This is so unscriptural, and the Apostle Paul declares every Christian to be saints and priests. Many Protestant Churches declare some believers to be deacons, but every Christian today is a servant of Christ. Our Lord said they are skilful to sidestep God's law in order to hold on to their own tradition.

Mark 7:14-23
14 And when He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, "Hearken unto Me every one of you and understand: 15 there is nothing from outside the man that entering into him can defile him, but the things which come out of him, those are what defile the man. 16 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 17 And when He was entered into the house from the people, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. 18 And He said unto them, "Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not understand that anything from outside that enters into the man cannot defile him? 19 Because it enters not into his heart, but into the belly, and the man goes out to the privy and purges all foods." 20 For He had said that it is what comes out of the man that defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, come forth the evil thoughts, the adulteries, the fornications, the murders, 22 the thefts, the covetousness, the wickedness, the deceit, the lasciviousness, the evil eye, the slander, the pride, the foolishness: 23 all these evil things come out from within and defile the man.
Our Lord explains that our speech defiles a person, and in the same breath He declared all foods clean. If we live naturally, our bodies (stomach) will decide what is clean and wholesome to be assimilated into our bodies, and what is junk. The junk and unclean food is routinely wasted from our bodies. Most religions have some kinds of restraints on food, whether the people in those religions follow them closely or not. But in this passage, Jesus declared all foods clean. Imagine the turmoil of a poor Jewish family who can barely afford to eat, and need to adhere to strict dietary rules because of the Jewish laws and tradition. Would it be better for them to go hungry and follow their rules, or to eat whatever food to live? Should God's law force people to go hungry, or should they be able to eat without worrying about defiling themselves? Jesus says they should eat! But on the other hand, there is more at play here.
'For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come – sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from within and defile us.' The only means to get rid of them is to 'put on Christ', and then His Words will become our words.
knew that every person has a sinful nature tucked away inside of them, whether it reveals itself publicly or not. Our Lord is our High Priest, and He cleanses us today. Always choose your words wisely. Without Christ, we are rotten to the core. They are not easily swallowed, and the sooner we swallow our pride, the better.

Jesus did not come to divide our lives, to continually decide what is good and what is sinful. No, it is time-wasting; rather, spend your energy studying the Word of God, and it will mould our minds. We need to walk alongside Him, to have our hearts transformed.
Jesus's birth, His life and teachings, His death, resurrection and ascension are acts of His saving grace that offer us the ability to know God and what He has done for us. We can recognise His work inside of us, and once He settles in our heart, we will be paid handsomely. Our tongues are transformed, and now we can glorify God, and our tongue is not controlled by Satan. This goes for something as mundane as food, or any other issue in our life. Thank God for everything we receive. He will touch it and use it to His glory.
What decides whether something is unclean or unfit to offer to God, to present Him an acceptable gift? The Jews went to great pains to ensure that their worship conformed to the instructions which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. God's call to His people was a call to holiness: 'Be holy, for I am holy.' (Lev. 11:44; 19:2). Jesus is making a broader point here. He says, '. . . nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile him. The food doesn't go into our heart, but it enters our stomach, and then out of the body. What comes from a person is what defiles him. For it is from within a person's heart, our evil thoughts, that defiles us.
'Everything we eat cannot contaminate us, and our body will determine what is good or bad. Our bodies will be alarmed by the 'unclean', so the bad can leave our body. Today, in our modern world, there are so many new chemicals, and our bodies are challenged to the utmost. The real bad comes from our heart.
Matthew 15 corresponds to Mark 7, and here the history unfolds somewhat differently. Matthew says we put bits into the horses' mouths so that they may obey us, and we guide their whole body. Behold, the ships also, though they are so big and are driven by fierce winds, are yet guided by a very small rudder, easily steered by a pilot. Hence the tongue is also a little member, and boasts great things. See how a small fire can spread to a large forest! And the tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire by hell (James 3:3-6).
James makes an interesting comparison.
Historically, the horse is considered to be a symbol of strength, speed, agility and loyalty. How many countless times has the horse been the deciding factor in a battle? Yet this powerful animal can be rendered as docile as a puppy by placing a small bit in its mouth, through which it learns to obey every command given to it. On the other hand, an uncontrolled horse can run away with its rider, taking the rider wherever it wants to go. In the same way, an unrestrained tongue will produce an out-of-control life. Secondly, the wind drives and tosses giant ships on the seas. Wind can become an unbelievable force of destruction, and yet the ship is tamed and controlled by the rudder. The rudder directs the course of gigantic ocean vessels using the slightest movement of a pilot's hand. Since it is hidden in the water, the passengers are unaware of its movements. Yet when it is in proper working order, the rudder holds more

power over the ship than the wind. James wants us to ruminate on this – as horses are controlled by bits in the mouth and the ships by rudders below the stern, what tools are likely to control our words? It is a very small member of our body called the tongue.
We need to keep our tongue in ‘check’. As earthly people, we have no means or strength to control the wild beast residing in our tongue, or even know how to tame it. We can control this ‘beast’ from ‘within’.
People believe their tongue, and once they said it, they believe it to be true. Once it is formulated in our minds, then it is ‘set’ down as ‘concrete’, thinking it is the truth. Some people may find it difficult to repent on their death bed, after they made a determined decision against Christ. They say it is impossible to veer from a course they decided upon earlier in their life. If you repeatedly refuse Christ, then a death-bed repentance is unlikely. It is possible for people who were never challenged with the resurrected Christ.
Solomon had many words of wisdom. He wrote: ‘My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don’t lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body. Guard your heart (tongue) above all else, for it determines the course of your life. Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech.’ (Prov. 4:20-24). The heart conveys the things we believed in for all our lives. What we say will determine our future. Our hearts are ‘set’ by what we read; the television and the World Wide Web have a great influence on our life. For a reason, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). Our race is to keep our minds focused on Christ. Once our thoughts are formed in our mind, slowly we know them to be true. It is moulded early in our lives.
Once the Word of God is anchored in our hearts, then we will develop the capacity to receive His blessings. The course of our lives is determined by whatever penetrates our hearts! It’s no wonder God instructs us ‘above all else’ to guard what our hearts are exposed to. Whatever we expose our hearts to will either direct us towards Christ or detour us away from God’s plan for our lives. When we fill our hearts with God’s Word, then we will automatically speak from the reservoir that fills our hearts – and our words will always be in compliance with God’s plan. Watching any news channel contaminates our minds with our world’s hopeless perspective. Eventually, the gloom and doom that enters our hearts will mould and shape our perspectives of life.
The wicked thoughts of the religious leaders are sculptured in their writings. They are the thoughts of ‘men’ (religious leaders) who created the ‘oral law’ with all its traditions. Today, it’s known as the Talmud, and it will pollute our minds. They were not created by God. They were coughed up by men to pollute our minds. Nothing is unclean in itself – only what comes from the inside of our heart pollutes us. It is not the air we breathe. Our stomach and lungs will filter the filth to retain the good.
My advice is to never study the Talmud – it will pollute your mind.
Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person (Col. 4:6).

Our words need to be seasoned with salt, as it flavours our food (Matt. 5:13). Salt prolongs life, and it is a preservative for certain foods, like salted fish. Our Lord said we are the salt of the earth. If the food lacks flavour, we bin it. We are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14), and the light reveals God's Words. In Matthew 5, both verses speak of the light and salt. They have a similar meaning. The Light is God's Word, and we are the bearers of the light. We need to talk about the hidden things (the mysteries of God) ; the words our world loathes (Col. 4:3), and our words need to be seasoned with the salt. If our words are sprinkled with salt, we reflect God's Word in a positive manner, speaking words that exhort men rather than confuse them. We need to follow the Lord Jesus' example here on earth, who continually quoted the Bible. There are many more verses in the Gospels where Jesus regularly quotes the Old Testament prophets, using the words, 'Is it not written?' Frequently, the apostles quoted the Old Testament. Since they are our examples, we too need to quote the Scriptures for our particular, individual needs. Jesus quoted Scriptures for several different reasons: to overcome evil, to bring healing, to teach the disciples, and to encourage us.
Unbelieving Israel is resembled by Lot's wife, who became a pillar of salt. Today, it's a definite tourist attraction. The pillar of salt is like a statue to remind us that the laws of Moses secure no life for Israel, and it is deemed totally lifeless compared to the truths of the new covenant spoken by Christ. Salt denotes the Word of God or His Spirit. The Spirit or God cannot be touched, but it flavours our life to give us a real purpose in life.

Mark 7:24-30
24 And from there He arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet He could not be hidden. 25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of Him and came and fell down at His feet. 26 Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' 28 But she answered Him, 'Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' 29 And He said to her, 'For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.' 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.
For a valid reason, Jesus wanted to distance Himself from the Pharisees to visit Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis. Their oppressive views smouldered within Him. He went to the heathen nations who were not polluted by their traditions, to finally end His journey at the Decapolis. Deca – ten – portrays the 10 lost tribes of Israel.
His first stop was Tyre, where He met a Phoenician woman. Phoenicia bordered the coastal fringes of Lebanon and Israel, and they supplied many goods to Babylon and the Far East along a famous caravan route running alongside the Euphrates and Tigris valleys down to Babylon. The rivers were famous waterways that facilitated the oldest trade networks. Sidon and Tyre controlled the regular trade routes linking all the harbours

in the Mediterranean Sea, reaching all the way to Europe. They had many colonies. Phoenicia is not to be confused with Lebanon or Syria. I believe somehow ancient Israel is tied to them. Israel did immigrate to many countries, and I am sure their knowledge of the seas advanced them with their migration. The tribe of Dan colonised the ancient world via the many trade routes. They had strong ties with Phoenicia, and they had the means to emigrate to the British Isles and Denmark (i. e. , 'Dan's mark' or settlement). If the Biblical tribe of Dan settled in early Europe, the other lost tribes of Israel followed suit. The ancient Trojan War may have been a war between Judah and Dan – who knows?

The Old Testament speaks more of Tyre and Sidon. When Tyre was at the height of its power, the prophet Ezekiel prophesied: 'And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her. . . and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. . . And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more.' (Ezek. 26:4, 12, 14)

The destruction of Tyre was deemed implausible. However, the prophecy that Tyre would be thrown into the midst of the sea, and its former location scraped like the top of a rock, seemed far-fetched. Yet both these prophecies were fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged the city and conquered it. However, the inhabitants of Tyre escaped to a nearby island, frustrating Nebuchadnezzar, but he reduced the city on the mainland to ruins. For 250 years, the ruins were a mute contradiction of the Bible. When Alexander the Great conquered the Medo-Persian Empire, the island city of Tyre resisted his advances. Frustrated by their efforts, Alexander ordered his troops to build a causeway to the island by throwing the ancient ruins of mainland Tyre into the midst of the sea, thus fulfilling the prophecy that Tyre would be thrown into the midst of the sea. The debris of ancient Tyre built the causeway to testify that the Bible is more than just an ordinary book.

Sidon is interpreted as 'hunting' via the means of fraud and deceptions. It is like setting a 'snare' and waiting patiently for the prey. Our dispensation, lasting 2000 years, does somehow picture this backdrop. We live in a time of waiting; the snare is set, and God waits patiently. God has a definite plan for our world, and they think God is asleep. Don't be fooled by His silence. He went to heaven, and He has a plan. Tyre and Sidon have a message, and passively throughout our time of grace, the Gospel is preached to the islands of the sea.

Our Lord again mentions Phoenicia in Luke 4:25–27, saying: 'But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

'There are two well-known incidents in the story of Israel. They must remember that God's mercies in past times were not confined to Israel alone. There were many starving widows in Israel, but Elijah was not sent

to any of them; he was sent to a despised Phoenician woman in Sarepta. Elisha did not hearken to the many cries of the lepers living in Israel; no, he was detoured to heal a Syrian leper named Naaman, the great opponent of Israel.
In the history of Mark 7, the woman from Phoenicia believed that her daughter was suffering from an ‘unclean spirit’, and she was determined to meet our Lord. Upon seeing Jesus and His disciples, she began crying out, ‘Take pity on me, Lord, Son of David. My daughter is badly demonised.’ She was a Canaanite woman. When Jesus did not respond to her pleas, the disciples asked Him to send her away, as she persisted in calling out after them. Our Lord did not dismiss her but said, ‘I have been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ She fell to her knees, pleading for Him to cast out the demon from her daughter. Jesus then told her that the children would have to be fed first and that it would not be right to take bread away from them and toss it to little dogs. The Greek word for ‘dog’ is kynárion (a little dog or those to guard our houses) and not kyon (a fierce scavenger dog). Still, the words would have tested the genuineness of the woman’s faith, whether she really believed Jesus to be the Messiah. With full trust that Jesus could cure her daughter, she replied, ‘Yes, Lord, but even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’ Or, ‘These little dogs would be under the table of their owner and eat the crumbs the children would drop.’ Her reply proved complete trust in Jesus’ ability to heal her daughter. Therefore, Jesus acknowledged her great faith and added, ‘Let it be to you as you desire.’ He assured her that, because of having expressed herself as she did, her daughter had been freed from the demon that plagued her. When the woman returned home, she found her child lying on the bed, freed from the demon.
It says Jesus entered a house and He did not want to be known, but He could not remain hidden. The woman who begged Him pictures the Church in our dispensation. We live outside Israel, and we are acquainted with Christ. With this healing, our Lord defined the framework of our dispensation.

Mark 7:31–37
31 Then Jesus returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak. ’
Jesus left the area of Tyre and Sidon and headed eastward to the Decapolis region. ‘Decapolis’ is only mentioned in Matthew and Mark, and

the cities are wrapped on the eastern border of Israel. Previously, the Decapolis is named when Jesus healed a demonic man who began to publish how great things Jesus had done for him (Mark 5:20). Matthew 4:25 adds no more to our knowledge of these cities. At the Decapolis, the people placed the afflicted at Jesus' feet, and He cured all of them. Among the afflicted who were brought to Jesus was a deaf man with a speech impediment. The people who were concerned about the well-being of the man begged Jesus to lay his hands on him. This was no ordinary healing, as there is so much detail, and many students may deem it pointless. He was dumb and had nothing to say.
Jesus led him away from the crowd; He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then, spitting on His own fingers, he touched the man's tongue. Why all the detail?

Only twice do we read of the Lord's healings where 'He took them apart from the crowds.' The other occurrence is in Mark 8 when He healed the blind person. These two healings are not mentioned in any other Gospel. Why the detail to place His fingers into his ears? It was not necessary, as He could have healed him at a distance. I believe this exchange is to remind us of some history in the Old Testament.
The ears are often cited in the Old Testament. An example is Psalm 40:6–8: 'Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Behold, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I am happy to do your will, O my God. Your teachings are deep within me. '
Primarily in Psalm 40, our Lord speaks of Himself as having had His ears bored. Did you notice the expression in the 40th Psalm: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire: My ears have you opened.' The Hebrew says, 'My ears have you dug.' Christ's ears, then, were pierced voluntarily, becoming the servant of God forever. The King of kings became the servant of servants. He has had his ears bored to be an eternal servant of God. We too need to have our ears pierced to be Christ's servants. When did this happen? I believe it happened with His resurrection from the dead. Clearly, Psalm 40 speaks of Christ, as it is cited by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 10. It says in Heb. 10:1 that the Old Testament offerings were repeated year after year, proving they were powerless to rid us of sin. They were ineffective. Heb. 10:2: If our conscience were cleansed by those offerings, then the offerings would have ceased. Instead, by repeating them, they proved that they were futile. Paul then quotes Psalm 40:6–8. The resurrected Christ has the only means to procure a definite payment for sin, and He does God's will. The resurrected Christ ascended to heaven to be seated with God, and His sacrifice is faultless, to be never repeated again. All the offerings of the Old Testament relate to Christ. Hebrews 10:9 says: 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second.' The risen Christ is our High Priest, and He appeared with His resurrection from the dead. Relentlessly, the Jewish nation chases the ideologies of the old covenant, but rightly He made an end of ALL the offerings with His death and resurrection. The words 'a body hast thou prepared me' suggest that the former tabernacle

and temple are redundant, as the body or sacrifice is the resurrected Christ. All sacrifices ceased since He was resurrected.
‘In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, behold, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.’ (Heb. 10:6, 7) The dumb man had his ears opened, and he is equipped to do the will of God, not as part of the old, the first covenant, but under the new (second) covenant. Not as part of the old creation, but as part of the new creation.
In the Old Testament, if after seven years’ service a slave decides to continue living with his master, he had to follow a set ritual. Even though he was freed but decided to be employed by his master, realising his master was laudable, he had to pierce his own right ear lobe unto the door post (Ex. 21:6; Deut. 15:17). Typologically, it implied that the slave was free, and he can enter the door. He continued living with his master, serving Him. The piercing of the ear to the doorpost suggests that the slave can hear God’s living Word. Christ is the door that will lead us to life (Jn. 10:7).
Don’t be mistaken. Jesus hanging at Golgotha is not the offering He made to God; that is where many Christians go wrong. The offering is not Him dying on the cross. Only two verses may suggest this, but they weaken once we study the many other verses that prove the opposite. He was led away to be crucified by Pilate, and by no means was the cross the altar. ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’ (Gal. 3:13) When the Lord cried ‘My God, my God, why did you forsake me?’ it is not Him being offered on the altar – if that is true, we can deduce that God did not accept the offering of our Lord on the cross. Christ offered His resurrected life to God. During Old Testament times, fire descended from heaven to accept the offer. Elijah once made an offering to God, and fire devoured it. I believe when God accepted the offer Christ made, the Spirit of God (or the fire) descended on Him and made Him rise from the dead. It did not happen to Him hanging on the cross. It is not His old body on the cross, as it is part of the old creation, but His resurrected life is accepted. It is totally part of the new covenant. Today, many Christians believe that when Christ ascended to heaven, His work ended for us. His resurrection is not the end, as our Lord said: ‘Here I am, I have come to do your will.’ (Heb. 10:7, 9) Since then, He is seated at God’s right hand, interceding for us. If His offering were not accepted, His death on the cross would have been senseless. He remains true to God, and He can forgive our sins, even cleanse our polluted minds (1 Jn. 1:9). We have a High Priest who is not part of the ‘law’ but who went into the real tabernacle in heaven (Heb. 8:2). He took his own blood (life), and with that He secured our salvation forever. I want to clear this, as it is such a great stumbling block.
‘Furthermore, it is obvious that our Lord was a descendant of Judah, and Moses said nothing about priests coming from that tribe.’ (Heb. 7:14)
The Lord was a descendant from Judah, and I believe an heir to the throne, and He could have become a king, but not a (high) priest. It is simply not possible under the umbrella of the old covenant, but the new covenant that commenced after His resurrection is different. When our Lord Jesus was on earth, He was no priest and therefore He could not bring sacrifices

as the Levites did in His time. How long was He on earth for? It was until His death. His crucifixion and death are part of His humiliated earthly lifespan, and Him dying on the cross could never have been an appropriate sacrifice on the altar, as stipulated by Moses.
Officially, the old covenant ended with His crucifixion, so He could not be a priest until His death, let alone the High Priest. At the earliest, He became the High Priest with His resurrection from the dead.
He was no priest, and He was not from Levi.
There is another reason why the death of the Lord Jesus was not a sacrifice in the Scriptural sense. We have already noticed that the altar is not the same as the slaughter house, where the sacrificial animals were slain. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ was not an altar, but a place of slaughter.
For example, we read: ‘He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.’ (Isa. 53:7) ‘The Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the written Law, and he became a curse in our place, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”.’ (Gal. 3:13)
What hangs on the cross is cursed. The cross of the Lord Jesus should not be viewed as an altar, but it must be seen as a place of slaughter. There was no mentioning of an offering when the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary. Even Peter avoided the word ‘sacrifice’. It says in 1 Peter 2:24: ‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.’ Generally, this verb ‘bore’ can be considered a synonym for the word ‘sacrifice’, so the word ‘offering’ was avoided.
There is another reason why the death of the Lord Jesus could not be called an offering. If the crucifixion were an offering, then God would have rejected the offer. The reason is that after His death, Jesus went to the abyss when He died. If it was a sacrifice, then fire would have descended from heaven to confirm that God did accept the sacrifice, followed by our Lord Jesus’ ascension into heaven. But it did not happen.
The last reason why the death of the Lord Jesus was not an offering to God is that a wooden cross could not be an altar. A wooden altar is unthinkable, as it had to be of stone, made from the earth. Earth is composed of tiny little stones. The altar of the Old Testament had stones and sand, and its outer casing was copper.
Symbolically, when our Lord placed his finger inside the ears of the deaf and mute person, He portrayed the servant who had his ears pinned to the doorpost. He became the servant of the Lord of heaven. The saliva that the Lord placed on his tongue is the living water or the Word of God. We need the water or the saliva in our mouths when we speak. The water is trapped in our mandible or jaw. Once, Samson used the jawbone of a donkey, and he killed many Philistines. Indirectly, the jawbone portrays the Word of God; the Word that judged the Philistines. A person may be dead or a skeleton, but his jaw will validate the words he spoke.
It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ Happily, the dumb person received the

Word of God, and he spoke plainly. It is a real miracle. Israel did not want to listen to the Word of God, and thus they are not equipped to preach the Word of God. Israel was the postman, and they were specially called to accept the ‘post’ and to disperse it. Something was sent to the post office, but the postman did not deliver the parcel. That is the reason why Hosea 1:9 calls Israel ‘Lo-ammi’ or ‘not my people’. Even though He had chosen them to be His people above all people, and had distinguished them from the other nations by various blessings and privileges, yet they refused the Word of God and did not serve, obey, and worship Him. They are harsh words, and Isaiah 28:8 says their tables are full of filthy vomit, and in no way is there any space for His Word. We may think the Jewish nations are blessed with great knowledge, but it’s skin-deep. The pressing question Isaiah asks is, to whom will God teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message? Will it be to the Jewish nations who are steeped in the law? No, to the Jewish nations the Word of God is ‘precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little’ (Isa. 28:9). They keep fabricating more laws. Isaiah says no! He will gather a people who will speak to the Jewish nation with stammering lips and in another tongue. It is true, as the Church is blessed with the true Word of God, and they provoke the Jewish nations to jealousy. Hosea 4:6 says: ‘My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest (postman) to me: because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.’ At the cross of Calvary, our Lord rejected the Jewish nations who refused Christ, but with His resurrection, He gathered a new people (the Church) to propagate the Gospel. Israel will be ‘Lo-ammi’, so the Jewish nations are NOT God’s people today, but after the rapture of the Church, they will become His chosen nation.
For a reason, Hosea says in the following verse: ‘Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, You are the sons of the living God.’ At the time when the 2 tribes of Israel are deserted, rejecting Christ, then he says a ‘people’ will be called the sons of the living God. We know who they are. They are the 10 lost tribes of Israel who never adhered to the laws of Moses. The deaf in Mark 7 and the blind in Mark 8 portray the ‘people’ who are called the sons of God, the time we now live in today. When did this happen? What matters is that with Christ’s resurrection, the blessings of the 2 tribes of Israel were transferred to the other branch of Israel, forming the bulk of the Church. They will hear and speak the Words of God (new postmen). Jeremiah went down to the potter’s house, and he saw him working at the wheel. But the vessel he made of clay got spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make (Jer. 18:3–4). The potter did not toss the clay in the trash bin, but from the same clay he made a vessel that pleased him. The first vessel is the 2 tribes of Israel, and the vessel that pleased him is the 10 tribes of Israel. It happened in a matter of minutes, from the same batch of clay – from the same nation or father Abraham.

When our Lord healed the man, He looked up to heaven, sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ It reminds us of Acts 1, when the heavens opened and Christ ascended into heaven. The word ‘sigh’ is the Spirit, as in Mark 8:12 when He sighed deeply in His Spirit.
The frenulum of his tongue came loose, making it more manageable, speaking like any other person. Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. This healing is tied to our dispensation of grace or the time of God’s mystery. God does everything on the quiet.
He did everything well, and they are the signs accompanying our Lord’s mission to earth. What a testimony! There are so many Scriptures in the Old Testament that testify to this, and I will name a few. They are mostly in the book of Isaiah.

- Isaiah 29:13–14: Therefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people sacrifice unto me and honour me with their lips, but have removed their heart far from me, and their worship with which they honour me was taught by the commandment of men (2 tribes of Israel). Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvellous work among this people with a fearful miracle (10 lost tribes), for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the prudence of their prudent men shall fade away.
- Isaiah 32:3–4: The fearful heart will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear (dumb man). No longer will the fool (Pharisees) be called noble.
- Isaiah 35:3–5: Comfort ye the tired hands and strengthen the knees that tremble. Say to those that are of a fearful heart, Be comforted, fear not; behold, your God comes with vengeance, with recompense; God himself will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
- Isaiah 42:6: I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles. I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. The words ‘covenant of my people’ in Hebrew is translated as Brit-Am or Britain. Indeed, in Acts 5, some of the apostles were locked in prison, but during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison and brought them out.
- Isaiah 49:9: I will say to the prisoners, Come out in freedom, and to those in darkness, Come into the light. They will be my sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare.
- Matthew 11:3–5: The disciples of John the Baptist went to Jesus and asked if He is the Messiah they’ve been expecting. Jesus told them, Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen—the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Gospel is being preached to the poor.

Mark 8:1–10
1 In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat,
Jesus called his disciples to him and said to them, 2 ‘I have compassion on
the multitude, because they have now continued with me three days and
have nothing to eat. 3 And if I send them away hungry to their own
houses, they will faint on the way; some of them have come from afar.’ 4
Then his disciples answered him, ‘How can one satisfy these people with
bread here in a deserted place?’ 5 He asked them, ‘How many loaves do
you have?’ And they said, ‘Seven.’ 6 So he commanded the multitude to
sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and gave thanks,
broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and they
set them before the multitude. 7 They also had a few small fish; and
having blessed them, he said to set them also before them. 8 So they ate
and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover
fragments. 9 Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And he
sent them away, 10 immediately got into the boat with his disciples, and
came to the region of Dalmanutha.

The opening verse seems to suggest that our Lord remained for some time on the north-eastern border of the Sea of Galilee. Thus, this chapter flows with the history of Mark 7, and it’s essential to know this history is related to the preceding chapter. His ministry is coming to an end. This passage seems to be a repetition of Mark 6, the feeding of the 5000; but once we study the details carefully, we will notice they are two different occasions, feeding twice a great multitude of people. We know a great multitude of people followed the Lord in the desert after He healed the dumb person who could not speak. They lived far from any amenities. However, there are some differences.

- Mark 6 relays the feeding of the 5000 men, and then we find the following numeric testimony: 5 loaves, 2 fishes for 5000 men, with 12 baskets left over.
- Mark 8 relays the feeding of 4000 men, and then we find the following numbers: 7 loaves, a few small fishes, with 7 baskets of leftovers.

What is the meaning of all the numbers?

1. I believe the significance of the feeding of the 5000 men in Mark 6 is reflected in the Church today.
2. The significance of the feeding of the 4000 men in Mark 8 portrays the truths pertaining to the calling of natural Israel on the Day of the Lord.

I have several reasons.

1. The feeding of the 5000 men with the 5 loaves and 2 fishes is written in all 4 Gospels, thus it has far greater importance, in contrast to the feeding of the 4000 men that is only written in Matthew and Mark.
2. The first feeding of the 5000 men is the calling of the Church, in contrast to the calling of natural Israel before the Millennium (4000 men).

Both histories and backdrops are very similar, except for the numbers. Once we study the numbers, we will get a clearer picture.
The number 5 concerns spiritual matters or the better things we cannot touch, but the number 4 expresses the carnal things. The previous dispensation of the law ended with the cross or the number 4, and today we are blessed with the 5th dispensation of grace. We are part of the new covenant.
During the 4th dispensation, God did give His laws to Moses to be shared with Israel. Somehow, the number 4 and 10 are tied, as the 10 commandments were entrusted to Israel during the 4th dispensation. Add up: 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10. The number 4, such as the multitude coming from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue, symbolises our material earth. We are familiar with the 4 dispensations that ended 4000 years since Adam was created. The resurrected Christ spells the end of the law, and today the unseen things (5) do rule our lives.
The number 12 appears 187 times in the Bible, and lots of history is tied to it. I will name a few: There are 12 tribes of Israel, 12 months of the year, 12 constellations of the zodiac. The stars pass through the 12 signs of the zodiac in their heavenly procession. During the great tribulation, there will be 144,000 servants of God (12 x 12,000 from each tribe of Israel). The dimensions and description given of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation 21:12–14 have multiples of the number 12. The wall of the city has 12 foundations, and it is named after the 12 apostles. The number 12 also suggests Christ's rule over the new creation. During the Millennium, the people will remain healthy, and they will not die. He will prevent any illnesses, and we compare it to the time when Israel traversed the desert, when the people's sandals did not wear down (Deut. 29:5). Only God can counteract decay.
The number 7 is God's very own number, and is associated with divine completion and perfection. 7 is the completeness of God's redemptive work in our world. He worked in our 7th dispensation to finally procure the new heaven and earth from the old. Seven is the number related to Christ's redemptive work for the world, and once the 7 is fulfilled, then God's salvation will be settled. Israel needs to surpass the 'sevens', whether it is the 7 x 1000 years, the 7 dispensations of our world, or the 7 years of the great tribulation. Once they do, then the suffering of Israel and our world will end. In contrast, the number 6 is given to man, and on that day he was created. The number 666 is the highest number any man can attain. Satan and the fallen angels will claim that number.
The number 2 foreshadows the truths related to the Church, and I will comment on this:

- One of Israel's offerings was the wave offering, which had two loaves made from one batch of dough. The movement or swaying of the loaves suggests life, and hence it is known as the 'wave offering' (Lev. 23:20). It was part of the feast of weeks. The priest signifies Christ, and despite the leaven (signifying sin) in the two loaves, they moved and were deemed to be 'alive'.
- With Christ's resurrection, there were 2 men standing at an empty tomb. On the same day, Christ also appeared to two men who left

Jerusalem to go to Emmaus (Luke 24:13). The men ought to have waited at Jerusalem until the 3rd day, as the 3rd day will bring the change. The 3rd day is often mentioned in the Old Testament, and I am sure our Lord pointed this out to the 2 men when they walked to Emmaus.

- With Christ's ascension on the Mount of Olives, two men stood at the place where He ascended into heaven. Possibly they were Moses and Elijah, who also appeared with the Lord on the mount when He was glorified (Luke 9:30).
- The Apostle Paul sailed in a ship whose sign was Castor and Pollux (Acts 28:11), the 2 stars in the constellation of Gemini. It is better known as the twins. The Church is reflected upon as a ship weathering the storms of the sea, and the sea pictures the sea of nations.
- The 'two men' or spies during Joshua's time are mentioned several times in the Bible, and they portray the Church. Being two, they symbolise us as the firstborn. Paul mentioned this twice in his letters (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 12:23). The two men who spied Jericho are not named, and it does not surprise me. When they were with Rahab, they secretly hid themselves, falling asleep on her rooftop. Similarly, we too are asleep to the world, as God has called us out of this world. Whilst being hidden, we are familiar with the mystery of His will, and we have the means to differentiate His plan (Eph. 1:9–10). As the two spies were the first to enter the land of Canaan, the Church too will be the first to enter His inheritance. We are dead, and yet alive unto Christ. Even though Jericho or the earth is cursed, we are the 2 who are blessed. While the men were asleep, they were unaware of the danger they were in.
- We are the real firstborn (Ephraim) and are blessed with a double portion. We will rule both heaven and earth. The 2 is tied to our 2000 years or the time of God's mystery. Don't forget the distance of 2000 cubits between the ark of God and Israel when they crossed the Jordan River. There are many examples, and they all foretell the 'break' in God's history, the 'break' we now experience. Our dispensation commenced when Christ resurrected from the dead, and it will end with the rapture of the Church.

Our Lord did not want to send the crowds away hungry after they had accompanied Him for three days.

Jesus knew that some of the people had to travel a considerable distance. Being in a deserted place, they had no way to feed the multitudes. Take note that the miraculous feeding happened on the third day. Our Lord did resurrect from the dead on the 3rd day, as the promises of God are usually fulfilled on that day. Every 3 in the Bible harbours a promise, whether they are made or if they are fulfilled. There are myriad examples, e. g. , when Israel crossed the Red Sea, it had to be on the 3rd day, and similarly on the 'day' when they had to cross the River Jordan. No matter how we look at it, it always has to be on the 3rd day. Israel received the law on Mount Sinai on the 3rd day (Ex. 19:11). Nine times it is mentioned that Christ will rise from the dead on the 3rd day, and yet the two on the way to Emmaus

were ignorant of this. The nation of Israel was born once they entered the waters of death or the ‘Red Sea’. They patiently had to wait for the 3rd day before they were allowed to cross the Red Sea, even when they knew Pharaoh was chasing them.
After dismissing the people, Jesus and his disciples boarded the boat and came into the region of Dalmanutha. It was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, close to the vicinity of Magdala, which is about six miles southwest of Capernaum (Matt. 15:39). According to Mark 8:10, a few ancient manuscripts read Magdala, Mageda, Magedan, or Melegada – maybe an attempt to make Mark 8:10 agree with Matthew 15:39.

Mark 8:11–13
Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. 12 But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, ‘Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.’ 13 And He left them, and entering the boat again, departed to the other side.
When Jesus reached the shores of Galilee, the Pharisees confronted Him head-on. The quarrel is bad enough, but they also ask Him to perform a ‘sign from heaven’ to prove that He is really the Son of God. Bear in mind that in John 3:2, the Pharisee Nicodemus had already recognised Jesus’s divinity. Nicodemus believed that Jesus is the promised Messiah.
The parallel account to Mark 8:11–13 can be found in Matthew 16:1–4. In this chapter, the Pharisees and Sadducees were opposed to each other in principles and in conduct; yet they joined hands against our Lord. They desired a sign of their own making, despising the signs when He healed the sick and troubled people. The religious leaders called for ‘something’ which would gratify their curiosity.
The Pharisees were experts in the Mosaic Law and legalism. As a result, they were also self-righteous and often attached more importance to legal observance than to the Scriptures. They were steeped in the Talmud. Society revered them.
The Sadducees were free-thinking rationalists who used the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament – written by Moses) on which to base their judgments. If a belief was too fanciful, like the existence of angels, they dismissed it either through ridicule or by posing questions asking for proof. It sounds like modern theology, which discounts faith and demands a neat factual answer. The first thing you notice about the people who walk in darkness is they’re comfortable with other people who also love the darkness, and for them the darkness deepens. The religious leaders were no different from Pharaoh. You remember, after all the signs and wonders that Moses did, it says, ‘Pharaoh hardened his heart.’ The signs did not change his attitude; no, it made him all the more wicked. They are sentenced to terminal blindness. The prime reason of the religious leaders is not to learn from Him, but to cross-question Him, to ensnare Him. Now, why did they demand a sign after all? He scolded them, saying they are a wicked and adulterous generation. He did not say ‘a group of people’ but He meant a complete generation! He meant all you leaders and the nation that follow their teachings. It is a scathing statement. He continues to say

they will have no sign, but wait – they will have one. It is the sign of Jonah. Matthew 12:39–40 says: ‘But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there no sign shall be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah; for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’ That’s the only sign you’ll be given. No more signs for the sceptics.

The sign of Jonah is quite remarkable, as the 3 days and nights are often referred to in Scripture. He says: ‘and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah.’ The irony is that the sign of Jonah was already given to them. Actually, the Lord Jesus said that a similar sign of Jonah will be given to them, meaning it will have a second and even a third fulfilment.

Jesus called Jonah a prophet even though he never made any prophetic statements. His own life, however, was prophetic in nature. God spoke to him twice. The first time, he ignored God, which resulted in Jonah being thrown into the sea of nations for ‘two days’. Miraculously, on the 3rd day, he was restored to life after dying in the belly of the fish. He obeyed his second mission, with the result that Nineveh came to repentance. The history of Jonah is duplicated in our Lord Jesus, as our Lord rose on the 3rd day. Likewise, the Jews will ‘live again’ as Jonah on the 3rd day.

Jonah was reluctant to preach the Word of God to the heathen nations, as Israel in the Old Testament who didn’t share the Word of God. Isaiah 49:6 says God planned it differently, and He will restore the people of Israel. ‘He will make you a light to the Gentiles, and they will bring My salvation to the ends of the earth.’ The sign of Jonah is more than the death and resurrection of our Lord, but it includes Nineveh that will come to repentance. The Apostle Paul cautioned the Jews who assumed they were safe. In Acts 13:40–41, he says: ‘Beware therefore, lest that come on you which is spoken in the prophets. Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which you will in no way believe, if one declares it to you. ’

The Jewish nation did experience the resurrection of Christ, but behind closed doors they deceived the people, maintaining it never happened. The proverb says ‘seeing is believing’, but obviously the religious leaders numbed their senses. That is real darkness. The other lost sheep or the 10 lost tribes of Israel and the heathen nations did accept Christ, and the religious leaders were furious. After all, Jonah or the early Christians did reach Nineveh, and He set them as a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 13:47; Isa. 49:6).

After all, the ‘sign of Jonah’ would be Jesus’ greatest miracle. With Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, He would be God’s chief sign to prove that Jesus was Israel’s long-awaited Messiah. As Jonah was swallowed by the fish to be spewed out alive on the 3rd day to accomplish his mission, similarly our Lord Jesus disappeared to the abyss to return on the 3rd day. He accomplished His ministry as the resurrected Christ. A common misbelief is that Jonah was alive in the belly of the fish. But Jonah 2:2 says, from deep in the realm of the dead, he called for help. The word ‘the dead’ is the translation of the Hebrew word Sheol, and it is hell. He died. The

clue of these verses is that the sign of Jonah will be repeated numerous times, in each believer's heart, as it pictures our death and resurrection with Christ, but also the future death and resurrection of Israel on the Day of the Lord. Then Israel will be worthy of the title the 'servant of God' (Isa. 41:8–9). The sign also depicts the revival of the ten tribes of Israel and hence the origin of our dispensation of grace. If we believe in the resurrected One, then we are part of His body and part of the 'sign of Jonah', but the unbelieving world will have no sign or any hope.

The reference to 'after three days and three nights' is genuinely until the 3rd day. Openly, our Lord spoke of the three days and three nights (Mt. 12:40), and when He was buried, the Jews merely wanted to guard His tomb for three days (Mt. 26:64). If they believed it word for word, they would have guarded the tomb until the fourth day.

We need to study the original Hebrew words as it appears in Jonah 1:17, on which the verse is based. The word 'day' in Jonah stems from the Hebrew word 'yom', and it is an inaccurate measurement of time, since it does not always infer a 24-hour period. Therefore, the 'three days and nights' (Jon. 1:17) can also be regarded as three periods. It includes a part of the first and third days, but the complete 2nd day. The Lord was in the tomb for only a fraction of the time on Friday and Sunday, but He spent the entire Sabbath (16th Nisan) in the grave. A fraction of the day could also be considered a day. Our own legal system is familiar with that type of reckoning. If a person is sent to prison, he arrives on day one, even if he arrives late on the first day. The day he leaves prison will also be reckoned a day.

Presently, the Jewish nation is surrounded by a sea of nations, as Jonah who was 'locked' in the belly of the fish. They are scattered amongst all the Gentile nations of the world. On the 'Day of the Lord' (3rd day), they will be gathered from the sea of the nations. Then they will obey Him as Jonah, with the idea to evangelise the world. The 144,000 sealed ones will finally achieve this.

Once Jesus set foot on the shorelines of Israel, He responded to the religious leader with a deep emotional sigh. 'He sighed deeply in His spirit'. The spiritual blindness and the sheer physical sufferings of the people did touch Him. It broke His heart, and that's why He wept when He entered Jerusalem (Luke 19). He also wept at the grave of Lazarus.

He renounced the religious leaders, and that was His last encounter with them until the day of His crucifixion. He departed from them as a people who were stubborn, incurable, and unworthy to be spoken to. However, more miracles did happen, but not in view of the Pharisees.

Officially, Jesus's desertion of the Jewish people takes place in John 12:35–36: 'Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.' Jesus spoke these things, and departed, and hid Himself from them.

Jesus departed in a boat (v. 13), condemning the Pharisees due to their unbelief. His Galilean ministry was coming to its end, and He was going down to Judaea for the last months of His life before He went to the cross.

He was wrapping up this extensive stay in Galilee for more than a year. This was His last encounter with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. It was a milestone because it was the last time the religious leaders of Israel would face their Messiah. From then on, if He related to them, He related to them as a condemning judge. Up to this point, there had been invitations extended to the leaders of Israel to accept Him, including the people who followed the leaders of Israel. Despite their lack of enthusiasm, the gospel would be preached to the heathen nations, and they would accept Him. So from now on, everything changed.

Mark 8:14–21
Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And He said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?
Our Lord was again on the seas, and He went to Bethsaida. His disciples had only one loaf of bread, and it did not trouble our Lord, but the religious leaders did agitate Him. When He spoke to His disciples about them, He referred to them as the leaven or the yeast. He cautioned them of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. The bread our Lord shared with the multitude is the Word of God, but the bread of the religious leaders will choke them. It was difficult for the disciples to understand or to digest the things our Lord spoke to them. He reminded them of the feeding of the great multitude, and they tried to assimilate everything but failed. Jesus did not blame them, knowing that after His resurrection from the dead, they would receive the Spirit to enlighten them. Shortly afterwards, He would heal a blind man (v. 23), and it happened in steps. At first, the man could not see clearly, but later he did. Similarly, the disciples would not understand everything when they were on the boat, but once they were ‘born again’, they would appreciate the finer details. Later, the disciples would understand all the signs He did, as every healing tells a different story. They must have sensed our Lord’s frustrations when He was challenged by the religious leaders of the day. Somehow, the disciples gathered that the topic on the boat was the bread and the leaven or the yeast. The bread is the Word of God, and leaven is the spoiled Word of God. The Word of God or the bread of our Lord is unleavened, and the leaven is the working of Satan. In Matthew 13:33, a woman secretly hid some leaven in three measures of flour, and it spoiled the entire batch of dough. Actually, leaven is a lump of old dough, making the dough rise.

‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.’ (Matt. 13:33)
A simple way to understand this parable is that the world (leaven) is spreading its influence into the Church (bread). The mere mentioning of the ‘leaven secretly taken by a woman and hiding it in the bread’ spells something sinister. The leaven symbolises the evil that infiltrated our churches. The parable of the leaven begins with these words: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven. . .’ Here, we need to be very cautious. What do we read? If we read the story like this – the kingdom of heaven is like leaven – then it would seem like Jesus is saying that the kingdom of God is the leaven which penetrates the world. But that is not the exact meaning. The fact that the kingdom of heaven is likened to leaven does not mean that the kingdom is the leaven. We need to read the full sentence, as there are no punctuation marks. When a parable begins with the expression ‘the kingdom of heaven is like this’, we should not assume that the first word (leaven) is likened to the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven is NOT like the leaven. The kingdom of God is like leaven put into the bread by a woman. We need to get a clear picture, as something is done very secretively, not to get stuck on the word leaven. The leaven symbolises the evil that infiltrated the bread or our churches today. The leaven is not the kingdom of God infiltrating the world (bread). The Word of God has much to say about ‘the leaven’. The Apostle Paul mentions the verb ‘leaven’ twice in his letters.
‘Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.’ (1 Cor. 5:6–7)
Do you get the picture? He says we, as Christians, are a loaf of bread, and we need to get rid of the leaven. Before the Passover, a special effort was made to get rid of all the leaven in the house, and similarly, we too need to get rid of the leaven in our lives. Clean out the old leaven of sin in your life. The leaven is from the previous day or from the previous fallen world before Adam was created. Paul wrote this in response to a Christian who practised a vile sin.
The word ‘leaven’ is used in the same negative way in Galatians 5:9: ‘A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.’ Paul is speaking about the influence of false teachers in the Church, maintaining we need to be circumcised. ‘It only takes a little leaven to affect a whole lump of dough.’ Thus, the influence of the false teachers. Once we allow the leaven to spread, it will permeate and mislead the whole Church. The main theme of the Book of Galatians is the law, and it is equated to the leaven. Our norm is grace, not the law, and the main message of the New Testament is our freedom from the law. Somehow, Christianity circumvented this message by defining a moral and a ceremonial law. They maintain we need to adhere to the moral law and not the ceremonial law. How absurd. They are the teachings of Satan to force us to distinguish them. They maintain the ceremonial laws were given by God to Israel, and prophetically they pointed to Jesus Christ. Most of these laws made a distinction between what was clean and unclean. Their opinion is that those laws were connected with the old covenant and were fulfilled through Jesus’ death

and resurrection. Thus, the ceremonial laws have passed and are void. In the same breath, they say that the moral laws were given by God and will never pass away, and they must never be broken, to yoke every Christian. The Ten Commandments (with the exception of the fourth commandment about the Sabbath Day) are all examples of moral laws. This is so unscriptural and deceptive. Once we allow a little yeast into the lump – the tiniest bit – then it will spoil the complete dough, rendering it useless for God's service. For a reason, the churches today are cold and empty, even though they look grandiose.

Leaven (noun) is frequently mentioned in the New Testament, spelling either a corrupt doctrine or immorality. In the Old Testament, leaven is symbolic of sin and evil. In every instance that leaven appears in the Bible, it spells evil. The new creation (new batch) has nothing in common with the old creation (leaven) that is transient.

However, in one of the offerings in the Old Testament, the leaven is present for a good reason. The wave offering was one of Israel's offerings, having two loaves made from one batch of dough. The two loaves were waved or shaken by the high priest 50 days following Christ's resurrection. The movement or swaying of the loaves suggests life, and hence it is known as the 'wave offering' (Lev. 23:20). It was part of the Feast of Weeks. The priest denotes Christ, and despite the leaven (our daily sin) in the two loaves, it remained 'alive'. This offering is different from all the other offerings, as it had leaven in the dough. This leaven proves that we, as part of the Church, are stained by sin. With our rapture, the problem of the leaven and the sin will be solved for ever.

'Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.' Leaven in this context is the false teaching, the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and hypocrisy. Many scholars believe that the Herodians looked to Herod as a messiah, a saviour of sorts who would put the Jewish land in favour with the Roman Empire and bring blessings to them.

Mark 8:22–26

And they come to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly afar off. And He sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

Jesus abandons Judaea – What now?

Since our Lord's encounter with the religious leaders, He decided to head north to Bethsaida and later even further north to Caesarea Philippi. He had no appetite to go south or to return to Judaea to face more criticism. It seems as if there is a crisis, but wait – God planned something very special. Officially, at that moment, our Lord abandoned the Jewish nation when He hid Himself from them (Jn. 12:35–36). John clarifies this when he says:

‘But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ (Jn. 12:37–38)

A fair question to ask is, who is the arm? In a real sense, ‘the arm of the Lord’ is none other than Jesus Christ, but today Ephraim or the Church are His ambassadors or the arm. He depends on them.

We find at least 40 biblical references to the Lord’s powerful ‘arm’ or ‘arms’ in Scripture, and the first mention of ‘the arm’ is in the Book of Genesis. I am sure our Lord felt despondent, but Judaea is not the only arm. Jacob prophesied about Joseph being the arm:

‘Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong, by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.’ (Gen. 49:22–24)

Joseph is like a prolific vine, and his branches (Ephraim and Manasseh) scaled the wall. The wall is the law, and it is the wall David once jumped over:

‘For by Thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.’ (Ps. 18:29)

We need to scale the wall or the law to be blessed. In the past, or with the Assyrian captivity, the archers grieved Ephraim or the ten lost tribes of Israel, and they were severely persecuted. He experienced many difficulties and struggled with the fiery darts of temptations, but when it mattered, he did accept Christ. He climbed the wall, and he is not yoked by the law as Judaea is. It proves that both Manasseh and Ephraim did not lose their power, and their hands are empowered once more by the Mighty One of Jacob.

Today, when we speak of Israel, we must not think of Judaea but rather reflect upon the ten lost tribes of Israel. The climax of the Book of Genesis ends with the question – who is the firstborn? Is it Judaea, Joseph (Ephraim), or Levi?

The firstborn right has a double share, and we may question why, in the Book of Exodus, Joseph did not become priest and king. He had to wait until the formation of the Church, once Christ was resurrected from the dead.

Isn’t it strange that from Judaea was born the King, and from Levi the priest? From Judaea our Lord was born, but since the death and resurrection of Christ, things did change for the better, especially for Joseph. With Christ’s resurrection, Levi ended their priestly duty, as the callings of the old covenant came to an end.

Under the umbrella of the new covenant, the duties of the priest went to Joseph, replacing the responsibility of Levi. The Hebrew word for Levi and Joseph are similar: in Hebrew, the word Levi is translated as ‘joined to’, and Joseph is ‘Jehovah has added’. The meaning is similar, as the priestly function is to heal and to bond the rift between us and God.

The King was from Judaea, but under the umbrella of the new covenant, things changed. Today, Ephraim are called to be both priest and king, and

every born-again believer is part of that blessing. In Christ, we became both priests and kings unto God (Rev. 1:6). Thus, when Jacob placed one leg over the other before he died, it implies the time when the Church is blessed with both the duties of the king and the priest. They are cherished by Joseph. The duty of the priest is to heal the people.

As our Lord is High Priest and King as part of the new covenant, likewise the priestly and kingly function is now treasured in Ephraim today. We, as the Church, are the real Israelites. Indeed, in the Book of Revelation ch. 12, we do read of a son that is born, and with the rapture of the Church, the Church is snatched to God and His throne. In this chapter, the woman is Israel, and the son is the Church. The critical moment is our rapture, and the woman (Israel) had to remain on earth for another 40 days (40 years), as she was unclean (Lev. 12:1–4). Once the 40 years ended, then she (Israel) will be reckoned as clean to enter the Millennium. If our mother is Israel, then surely we too are Israel. The Apostle Paul makes it clear:

‘Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God shall justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.’ (Gal. 3:6–9)

Anyone – Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, male or female, white or black – can be a child of Abraham and inherit the blessings promised to Abraham’s children. Most Christians would simply shrug their shoulders at this, as they have no idea what it means to be a son of Abraham or any sense of its blessings. The other reason why Christians are reluctant to believe this is that they think they are not Jewish. Sonship does not depend on physical descent, as later the Apostle Paul says, ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.’ (Gal. 3:28–29)

To be a child of Abraham is to be like Abraham. In John 8:39, the Jews defended themselves against Jesus’ condemnations by saying, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus replied, ‘If you were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.’ Jesus shows us they are not Abraham’s children, even though they are Jews. To be a child of Abraham means being like Abraham, doing what he does, and believing what he believes.

In Old Testament times, the believers knew they had to wait for the new earth, but for the past 2000 years, the believers in Christ have a far higher calling, as we are now with Christ in heaven. Nothing in the Old Testament was spelled out directly to alert the prophets of our high calling, but the much-contested firstborn right in the Book of Genesis did hint at something very special. Our calling surpasses any other calling, and it is only meant for the believers in our dispensation or the Christians from Christ’s resurrection until the rapture of the Church. The calling of the Church is exceptional! We are the result of God’s working in a hostile world, something that was not clearly spelled out in the Old Testament. It says in the Book of Habakkuk that the Lord will do a work you will not

believe: ‘Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.’ (Hab. 1:5)
It was said to Israel, and we may ask, which work? What would they not believe? It is the calling of the Church from all the countries of the world? Simply, they will not believe this.
Even during the time of Moses, God said, ‘I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.’ (Rom. 10:19; Deut. 32:21) ‘For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.’ (Isa. 28:11; 1 Cor. 14:21)
The Apostle Paul says that this is accomplished by the Church today. God’s idea is to restore a previously fallen world, and He is doing something special, much more than what the world could have dreamed of.
At one moment, Elijah thought he was all alone and had better be dead. God spoke to him and said: ‘Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.’ (1 Kings 19:18)
The 7000 people were from Israel and not Judaea, and similarly, here in the Book of Mark, our Lord did not feel forsaken after Judaea rejected Him. When we study Romans 9 to 11, we need to understand who Israel is and who Judaea is. Once we know the difference, then the chapters will be so much easier to understand. The Apostle Paul mentioned the 7000 men from Israel when he spoke of the remnant today (Rom. 11:4).
When our Lord touched the blind man’s eyes, he did not see immediately. This is really a two-stage miracle. After the first stage, the man could see, but his vision was blurred. Only when Jesus touched him a second time could he see clearly. There is nothing like this in the Gospels. We know that everything Jesus did, He did for a purpose. He never performed any miracles for no reason at all. So there must be some purpose in this two-stage healing of the blind man. Why did He heal this man in stages? It is not a lack in Jesus’ healing power. It is possible to have eyes and not to see very clearly. The blind man saw the men as trees walking, thus having a blurry vision.
That is precisely what Jesus was trying to get across to His disciples: ‘Do ye have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? and yet ye cannot see clearly who I am?’ Cloudy spiritual vision is as if we are looking into a foggy mirror. The disciples noticed the leaven, but they had no spiritual insight into its significance. They and the Apostle Peter had ears and eyes that did not see, but they would be opened at a second stage. After Christ’s resurrection, we read in the Gospel of Luke: ‘And their eyes were opened.’ (Luke 24:31) Not that their eyes were shut or closed, but the scales were removed, and what hindered their sight and knowledge was taken away.
Many Christians argue today that God’s work with Israel is put on hold, and He is presently dealing with the heathen nations. Yes, that is true, but in a mysterious way, He relishes the firstborn blessings of Ephraim (Israel) on the Church today, and most Christians are ignorant of this. The disciples, as the blind man did, did not ‘see’ everything immediately, but

they did once Christ was resurrected from the dead. Then the veil was lifted.

Jesus Journey to Jerusalem (Chapters 8:27 –10:1)

Schematic Structure (Mark 8:27–10:52)

1. Peter's Confession & Identity Revealed (Mark 8:27–30)
   - At Caesarea Philippi (Dan's hub/Laish) – symbolic center of 10 lost tribes.
   - Peter: "You are the Christ."
   - Command: Tell no one until resurrection.
   - The emphasis: First mention of Church (on "rock" = resurrection truth, not Peter). Shift from Judah (rejection) to Israel (remnant). Son of Man (Adam's heir) → Son of God (resurrected).
2. First Prediction of Suffering & Cost of Discipleship (Mark 8:31–9:1)
   - Must suffer, be killed, rise on 3rd day.
   - Peter rebukes → "Get behind Me, Satan!"
   - Deny self, take up cross; save life/lose it; gain world/lose soul.
   - Some will see kingdom come with power.
   - Cross as hidden mystery (symbolism, not literal prophecy). Soul = present life/walk. Rewards tied to faithfulness. 3rd day = OT promise pattern.

3. Transfiguration & Healing of Boy (Mark 9:2–29)
   - Glory on mountain (Moses/Elijah discuss "exodus"/death at Jerusalem).
   - Voice: "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him!"
   - Descent: 9 disciples fail to cast out spirit; Jesus succeeds by prayer.
   - Mount = heaven/glory (Sinai parallel). 3 disciples = Church remnant. Boy = Israel's demonic state healed (new creation). Prayer = dependence. Ephraim (lost tribes) receptive.

4. Second Prediction & Teachings on Greatness/Stumbling/Salt (Mark 9:30–50)
   - Secretly through Galilee: Betrayed, killed, rise 3rd day.
   - Disciples argue "who is greatest?" → Servant of all; receive child = receive Me.
   - Outsider casting out demons: "Not against us = for us."
   - Stumbling blocks (hand/foot/eye); better millstone than cause little one to stumble.
   - Salted with fire; have salt (Word) in yourselves; peace.
   - Humility/faith like child. Soul salvation = present faithfulness/rewards. Salt = Word of God (preserve/flavor; no leaven/law). Hell = second death/annihilation.

5. Transition to Judea & Teaching on Marriage/Divorce (Mark 10:1–12)
   - Enters borders of Judea beyond Jordan; teaches crowds.
   - Pharisees tempt: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

- Jesus: From creation, male/female become one flesh. What God joined, let no man separate. Divorce due to hardness of heart (Moses permitted bill of divorce).
- In house: Remarriage after divorce = adultery.
- (Typological, far greater than earthly marriage): God married Israel at Sinai (old covenant); divorce due to idolatry/hardness (Jer. 3; Isa. 50; Hos.). God as Husband; Israel as unfaithful wife. Old marriage ended (10 tribes Assyrian captivity; Judah via cross/death of Husband). New covenant = new marriage (not patching old). Church = body of Christ (Eph. 5:31–32; one flesh like Adam/Eve; profound mystery). Israel (10 tribes) more receptive; reversal (first/last). Remarriage forbidden under old (Deut. 24); new creation discards old. Future: Church (Bridegroom side) + reborn Israel (bride).

6. Children & Kingdom (Mark 10:13–16)
   - People bring children; disciples rebuke.
   - Jesus angry: “Let the little children come… of such is the kingdom of God.”
   - Receive kingdom as little child or not enter. Blesses them.
   - Faith/humility like child (currency of kingdom). “Little ones” = disciples/believers. Church as humble “little ones” exalted later. Reversal theme continues.

7. Rich Young Ruler & Riches in Kingdom (Mark 10:17–31)
   - Young ruler (ruler, rich): “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”
   - Jesus: Commandments; “One thing you lack—sell all, give to poor, take up cross, follow Me.”
   - Ruler grieved, leaves (great possessions).
   - Jesus: Hard for rich to enter kingdom (camel through eye of needle easier).
   - Disciples astonished: “Who then can be saved?” Jesus: Impossible with men, possible with God.
   - Peter: “We left all.” Jesus: 100-fold now (with persecutions) + eternal life in age to come. Many first shall be last; last first.
   - Ruler = self-righteous Jewish reliance on law/riches (like Pharisees). Law cannot justify; need new birth/grace. Riches = religion/tradition (not just money). Camel (3/promises) through needle (100/enter kingdom) = faith in Word (not law/riches). 100-fold = Church as firstfruits (full reward). Reversal: Jewish nation (first) last; 10 tribes/Church (last) first. Rewards for leaving all.

8. Third Prediction, Servanthood & Greatness (Mark 10:32–45)
   - On road to Jerusalem: Jesus ahead; disciples amazed/afraid.
   - Private to 12: Delivered to chief priests/scribes → condemned, to Gentiles → mocked, scourged, killed; 3rd day rise.
   - James/John (via mother Salome): Sit at right/left in glory.
   - Jesus: Can you drink My cup/be baptized with My baptism? They say yes. You will, but seats not Mine to give.

- Other 10 angry. Jesus: Gentile rulers lord over; not so among you. Great = servant; first = slave of all.
- Son of Man came to serve, give life as ransom for many.
- Road to greatness = suffering/cross (not worldly power). Cup/baptism = share sufferings/death. Servanthood model (Jesus washing feet). Reversal in hierarchy.

9. Healing of Blind Bartimaeus at Jericho (Mark 10:46–52)
- Leaving Jericho: Blind Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) begs by road.
- Hears Jesus; cries “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy!” Crowd rebukes; he cries louder.
- Jesus stops, calls him. Bartimaeus throws away garment, comes.
- Jesus: “What do you want?” “That I may receive my sight.”
- “Your faith has made you well.” Immediately sees; follows Jesus on the way.
- Bartimaeus (“son of the honourable”) = 10 lost tribes/Ephraim (firstborn, “honourable” via promises; blind/lost but calling on Son of David). Jericho (cursed/ruined/rebuild at cost of firstborn) = fallen world/old creation redeemed via cross. Two blind men (Matt.) = divide/reversal (Judah vs. Israel). Casting garment = forsake old (like Joseph/Paul). Sight = spiritual eyes opened (Church/10 tribes receptive). Journey from Jericho (start) to Jerusalem (cross). Rahab remnant parallel; lost sheep found. Reversal: Blind (last) see first.

Key Overarching Themes (Mark 8:27–10:52)
- Journey Arc: Galilee (10 tribes receptive) → Judea/Jericho (transition) → Jerusalem (cross). Starts with identity at Dan’s hub; ends with blind seeing before cross.
- Mystery of Cross: Hidden in symbolism (not plain OT prophecy); strategy fooling Satan. Fulfilled in resurrection. “3rd day” = promise.
- Church as Firstborn Remnant (Ephraim/10 Lost Tribes): Receptive “lost sheep”; inherits priestly/kingly roles. Reversal (“first last; last first”). Judah (law/riches) resistant.
- Marriage Typology: Old covenant (Sinai) = failed marriage (divorce via idolatry/hardness). New = body of Christ (one flesh, Adam/Eve mystery; Eph. 5). Not patching old; new creation. Future: Church + reborn Israel.
- Salvation of Soul: Present faithfulness, deny self, rewards (100-fold now + eternal). Not just eternal destiny. Riches/religion/law hinder.
- Kingdom Entry: As little child (faith/humility). Impossible with men (riches/law); possible with God. Servant leadership.
- Symbolism & Reversal: Camel/needle (3/promises through 100/kingdom); Jericho (cursed world redeemed at firstborn cost); blind seeing (10 tribes).
- Practical Call: Leave all (family/riches/tradition); take cross; serve; have salt (Word); peace.

Mark 8:27–30

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

We can question why our Lord did leave Galilee to go north to Caesarea Philippi or 'Laish', where Dan settled. I believe it is the idyllic spot to reveal Himself. After He did reveal His true identity, He returned to Galilee. Why at that precise location?

Caesarea Philippi is a town on the northern confines, at the foothills of Mount Paneas, and close to the springs of the Jordan River. It is 40 kilometres above the Sea of Galilee, and it was previously called Laish or Dan. Early in the history of Israel, the people from the tribe of Dan lived in southern Israel, bordering the Philistines. They felt threatened by the Philistine people, and a party of men left them to conquer new territory – a land in the north. They seized a city called Laish. They slew its inhabitants and resettled it, naming it after their father Dan (Judg. 18:27–29). Dan always had the notion to leave their name wherever they emigrated to – and we can follow their trails throughout Europe and the United Kingdom. There are multiple towns and rivers named after them. Think of Denmark and the River Danube in Europe. Scotland especially has the following towns named after the early conquerors: Dundee, Dunraven, Aberdeen; and in Ireland, we have more examples, such as Dún Laoghaire, the Dunkellin River, Dundalk, Danslough, Dansower, Dungarvan, Dundrum, Dungloe. Surely, this is no coincidence that the Irish Gaelic word 'dún' or 'dunn' means 'fort' or 'hill fort', and it is related to the word Dan (judge) in Hebrew. Dan conquered many towns. Read my notes on Judges chs. 18 and 19.

Dan is like a snake, leaving behind a trail we can easily follow. When Jacob blessed the tribes of Israel, he said the following of Dan: 'Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.' (Gen. 49:17)

Dan will judge the people, and that is a hint of our Church today, who will judge the angels in heaven (1 Cor. 6:3). The serpent caused the disruption (break), as the rider fell backwards, and then follows a notable verse: 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.' If ever in our history there is a time of waiting, it is our dispensation, and to date it has lasted nearly 2000 years.

I am sure our Lord had a valid reason to go to Caesarea Philippi. It wasn't to admire the lovely scenery but to alert us of something new. Most Christians are ignorant that the history of Israel – the ten lost tribes of Israel – is continued in the Church, and on this occasion, our Lord's true identity is disclosed in the 'hub' that belonged to the tribe of Dan. In the history of the Old Testament, the remnant of Judaea was always Benjamin, but the remnant coming from the ten lost tribes of Israel is Dan. The remnant in our time of waiting will be from Israel and not Judaea, from Israel (Dan) and not Judaea (Benjamin).

The Book of Mark is not as detailed as Matthew 16, and we need to make an in-depth study of the chapter to grasp the backdrop. Matthew 16 is especially concerned about the identity of Jesus and who He really is. Did the people and the disciples believe what He told them, and who did they think John the Baptist was? Shortly, they would be heading towards Jerusalem, where Jesus would be crucified; they needed solid faith in Him. Our Lord blatantly asked them who they thought He really was and whose Son He was. There was a dilemma, as they were forced to give an honest answer.

The Gospel of John commences with the question (1:19), 'Who is John the Baptist?', when the Jewish leaders send a delegate to ask him who he really is. John the Baptist said, 'I am not the Messiah, Elijah, or the prophet they expected.' He did not tick any of the three boxes. Finally, John the Baptist said he was just a voice shouting in the wilderness – 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' It is a strange answer coming from him. It is a citation of Isaiah 40:3. At that moment in time, John the Baptist applied the prophecy to himself, but later it would be applied to the resurrected Christ. Isaiah 40 to 48 is a long passage enclosing the events surrounding Christ's second coming to earth. John the Baptist said he was the voice, and later the Apostle Paul applied the passage to himself or the Church, saying we are a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. 'Who is the light of the world?' (Acts 13:47; Isa. 42:6) We too happen to be the light. The prophecies of Isaiah do repeat themselves many times, as the words of Isaiah were fulfilled by John the Baptist and today in the Church, but there will be a final and literal fulfilment with Christ's return to earth. Elijah, John the Baptist, and the Apostle Paul are a type of Christ, and after the rapture of the Church, the two witnesses in Jerusalem (Rev. 11) will also be a type of Christ. The incarnation is not biological, but the Word of God is literally fulfilled with Christ's resurrection from the dead. John the Baptist can be viewed as a reincarnation of Elijah – and why not? The two witnesses in the Book of Revelation ch. 11 will be a reincarnation of both Moses and Elijah. We need to understand this. John the Baptist said he was not the promised Elijah, but later our Lord said if the Jewish nation had accepted Him, then John the Baptist would have been the promised Elijah (Isa. 40:3). It sounds confusing to many Christians, but we need to grasp this concept.

The first answer the disciples gave to Jesus was that the people thought He was the prophet. They were familiar with the verse: 'I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' (Deut. 18:18)

He would tell them everything, and the Jewish nation was familiar with the words, and the Samaritan woman in John 4 knew of such a prophet. The Samaritan woman told Him, 'I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.' (Jn. 4:25)

The Samaritan woman believed every Word our Lord told her, and besides, she was familiar with the five Books of Moses. With the Assyrian captivity, the ten tribes of Israel took the writings of Moses with them. The

Samaritan woman proved they were familiar with them. A prophet would appear like Moses, and he would reveal everything, and He would redeem the world on a more grandiose scale. The things that used to be a mystery for Moses, or the hidden things he mentioned as belonging to the Lord our God (Deut. 29:29), would be revealed to us via the new covenant. The woman knew He was the Messiah once the Lord told her: 'I that speak unto thee am he.' (Jn. 4:25–26) Through His Spirit, everything would be made known to us.

Obviously, we know that both Moses and Elijah will return during Daniel's 70th week (Rev. 11), but to us who believe as the Samaritan woman did, He did appear.

Secondly, the people thought He was Jeremiah: 'They responded by saying that some people thought Christ was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets.' (Matt. 16:15)

Many Jewish people thought that Jeremiah was the Messiah, and they knew he died, but he prophesied he would reappear. Once we study the following Scriptures, you will understand this:

'See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.' (Jer. 1:10) Jeremiah warned the Jewish nation for 40 years that Jerusalem would be destroyed, and it would happen in three phases (627–587 BC). The ten lost tribes of Israel disappeared 120 years earlier in the Assyrian captivity (722 BC), and Daniel, who was a prince, got deported to Babylon with the first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

It prophesies Jeremiah would destroy and overthrow, but he would also plant. Judaea was destroyed very methodically by King Nebuchadnezzar, as the nation was deported into the Babylonian captivity.

But what did Jeremiah plant? Later, in the Book of Jeremiah, he said: 'For mine eyes shall watch over them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up.' (Jer. 24:6)

Jeremiah prophesied he would return. The Jewish nation argued he did not finish his work and never returned to them. We don't even know how Jeremiah died after Jerusalem was devastated. Jeremiah was released from prison by the Babylonians, and he had the freedom to choose his future abode. So he was entrusted to the governor of the province of Judaea. The prophet continued to oppose those who wanted to rebel against Babylonia, but later his governor was assassinated. Jeremiah was taken against his will to Egypt by some of the Jews who feared reprisal from the Babylonians. Even in Egypt, he continued to rebuke his fellow exiles. But there is a ray of hope. Jeremiah 41:10 speaks of the daughters of Zedekiah, who was the king of Judaea. The king and all his sons were killed in Babylon, and all the nobles of Judaea were killed. Daniel was spared. All possible heirs to the throne of David were killed, except the king's daughters. Jeremiah was going to take the heir – according to God's laws – to the throne of David and plant it somewhere else: 'And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.' (Num. 27:8)

He did, and they were esteemed once more. The only difference is that this time they would rule over the house of Israel! This royal party included the son of the king of Ireland, who had been in Jerusalem at the time of the siege. The ‘son of the king of Ireland’ married one of King Zedekiah’s daughters when the city fell. They later settled in Ireland. Besides the royal family, Jeremiah brought with him many things. The remarkable things included a harp, an ark, and a wonderful stone called ‘lia-fail’ or the ‘stone of destiny’. Many kings in the history of Ireland, Scotland, and England have been coronated on that stone – including the present queen. The stone rests today in Westminster Abbey in London, and the coronation chair is built over and around it. A label on the side of the chair reads: ‘Jacob’s pillar-stone.’ (Gen. 28:18) Now that is Irish folklore. The kingdom was ‘planted’ somewhere else – and the ten lost tribes of Israel are blessed. At the time of Christ, the people thought Jeremiah would return to plant the derelict throne of David at Jerusalem, but it happened not to be at Judaea but instead it settled amongst the ten lost tribes of Israel. The people of Judaea heard the bell ringing, but they never seized the occasion.

Our Lord visited Dan for a valid reason, and there is no doubt in my mind they did repent, unlike Judaea. Jeremiah 31 is written more than 100 years after the Assyrian captivity, and when the ten lost tribes of Israel disappeared north, many thought that it spelled the end of the ten lost tribes of Israel and Ephraim’s birthright. Jeremiah said they did repent, as the prodigal son who tended the pigs. Jeremiah 31:18 says: ‘I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. ’

Ephraim is the firstborn, and he will return! Ephraim and Dan proved to be a real blessing to the world, and they were always willing to spread the gospel, as the United Kingdom, who sent many missionaries to reach all of Europe and the other major continents. They conquered the mighty oceans. The Danish people invaded Britain. Our Lord did not go to Judaea or Galilee – no, He went even further north to a place steeped with the history of the Danish people. There, the Apostle Peter was the first to express his real faith in Christ, acknowledging that Jesus is the Christ. There is also the first mention of the Church.

Our Lord asked the disciples, ‘Who do the people say the Son of Man is?’ Our Lord said He is the true Son of Man, but in Matthew 16:16, Simon Peter revealed even more. He said He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus responded to the Apostle Peter’s words, saying He would give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever he binds, God will bind. And whatever he sets free, God will set free.

For a valid reason, the ‘Son of Man’ appears 84 times in the New Testament: Matthew ×30; Mark ×13; Luke ×26; John ×11 = 80 times in the Gospels only. In Hebrew, it is translated as ben-Adam, meaning ‘son of man’ or ‘son of Adam’. ‘Adamah’ in Hebrew is translated as earth or red. Many scholars argue that the phrase ‘Son of Man’ is simply a commonly occurring idiom. No, the Son of Man is one of Jesus’ titles, as He is the Heir of the throne. The New Testament portrays Jesus Christ as God’s Son (Heb.

1:6), implying that the resurrected Christ is the true Son of God. He holds the ‘birthright’, and He is the Heir of everything the Father has (Heb. 1:2). The inheritance that Christ receives includes the believers, who are entrusted to the Son (Jn. 6:37). Hence, the Son of Man is the Heir of Adam, and it can be proven in the genealogical list from Adam to Abraham, then Abraham to David to Jesus, to finally resolve in the resurrected Christ (Matt. 1 & Luke 3). He is the ‘Son of Man’ of all the earth, and not restricted to Israel only.

John 12:34 says that the scribes who studied the law knew that the Messiah would remain for ever, so how can ‘the Son of Man be lifted up’ or die? Who is this ‘Son of Man’ or the Messiah (Christ) ? The scribes knew that the title ‘Son of Man’ belongs to the Messiah, and today the mainstream Christians are unaware of this. The question on the minds of the scribes was, if Jesus is the Messiah, then why is He speaking of His death? And why would the true Messiah be killed? They had been taught the positive side of the Messiah’s coming but missed the complete picture and did not study Daniel’s prophecy. Daniel foretold Jesus’ death, who prophesied that the prince would be ‘cut off’ (Dan. 9:26). Besides, David gives graphic details of the Messiah’s suffering and death (Ps. 22). That did not agree with the Jewish image of a conquering Messiah who would liberate Israel. Before Jesus’ death, He was not the Messiah, but He inherited the title with His resurrection.

Simon Peter revealed more, saying He is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God. Thus, He inherits the title the ‘Son of Man’ and the ‘Son of the living God’.

Many today believe the throne of David is now in heaven. No, the throne of David is not in heaven but is restricted to earth. Today, we are familiar with the throne of grace in heaven and not the throne of David in heaven. We need to keep them apart. Acts 15:16 says, after this – or after our dispensation of grace – Christ will return, and He will rebuild the fallen tent of David: ‘After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.’ The throne of David is not restored today. The Son of Man did become the Son of God, and the throne of David is still future, awaiting the Millennium.

Jesus responded to the Apostle Peter’s confession, telling him, ‘On this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ (Matt. 16:18–19)

Since Christ’s resurrection from the dead, the old covenant is ‘bound’ and the new covenant is set free. This is a simple text. The key is the power of our Lord’s resurrection, and the Apostle Peter did not walk around with a bunch of keys tied to his belt.

Many Christians today will tell you that Peter is the rock on which Jesus laid the foundation for His Church. At first glance, it appears that Jesus was referring to Peter as ‘the rock’, but we have to keep in mind that the New Testament was written in Greek, not English. The Greek word for

Peter is petros, which means ‘a pebble’ or a small stone. On the other hand, the Greek word our Lord used for a rock is Petra, meaning ‘a massive rock’. Now we can see that there is an obvious difference! Peter was correct when he stated that Jesus was ‘the Christ’, and it was this profession of truth that the Church is founded upon: Jesus Christ is talking about building His Church upon the solid rock, not upon a small pebble (Peter). Did you notice something? The Apostle Peter is the first convert, and here we also have the first mention of the Church. The chosen venue of this disclosure is at the heart of the country that used to belong to Dan, and not Judaea. There is a shift in rule.
Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about Him, and why this secrecy? The reason is they had to wait until the resurrection of Christ, and then they could speak freely of Christ’s real deity (Acts 2:29). It was kept secret from Satan, who failed to grasp God’s plan of salvation. Jesus had to die before He was exalted.

Mark 8:31 - 33
[31]And he began to teach them that it was convenient that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and of the princes of the priests and of the scribes, and be killed and after three days rise again. [32]And he spoke this word clearly. Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him. [33]And he, turning about and looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter, saying, Get thyself from me, Satan, for thou knowest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men.

Our Lord did upset the disciples when He broke the news, saying He would die, and now was the first time He spoke to His disciples clearly. We can conclude that previously our Lord did not speak to them clearly. The most vivid and detailed prediction about the sufferings of the Messiah is the prophecy of Isaiah, chapters 52 and 53. This prophecy details the sufferings of Jesus, but nothing is said clearly. The Lord rebuked the disciples and the religious leaders for their ignorance, as they should have studied the Scriptures to figure it out for themselves. Today, many theologians think that all Scripture should be studied literally, and they refute any figurative speech. If we study the Bible literally, we will NEVER notice the death and resurrection of our Lord. The Bible is rich in symbolism. It complicates everything, and the purpose is to hide many truths in the Bible from Satan. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord (1 Corinthians 2:8). Throughout Old Testament times, Christ's death and resurrection remained a mystery. We need to be in touch with symbolism, and it is impossible to study the Scriptures saying we need to read it literally. Symbolism in the Bible colours the picture and gives it the extra dimension. Our Lord blamed the two on their way to Emmaus for refusing to believe everything the prophets taught them (Luke 24:13–53). Christ opened the Scriptures to them and confirmed that everything in the Bible relates to Him. In the Book of Acts, we have the history of the Ethiopian eunuch who asked Philip a question. He had to explain the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, as he was curious to know of whom the prophet was talking. Did Isaiah speak

of himself or someone else (Christ) ? The shearing sheep is the Lord who was crucified. We and the disciples need to delve deeper into the Scriptures, appreciating that the subject of the Bible is the resurrected Christ and not us.

‘In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things’ (Hebrews 1:1–2). The point is this: in the past there were possibilities that God could speak to them directly in the Old Testament, and they could hear Him speak. He did speak and He was not silent, whether it was dreams, nature or metaphors. He did not withdraw Himself. Today, God communicates even better with us, through the resurrected Christ in our hearts. The Book of Hebrews says God spoke to us in various ways before Jesus came to earth, and lately He speaks to us via Christ. The Book of Hebrews has one subject, and it is the Great Day of Atonement; symbolism explains it all. Systematically, the Apostle Paul reveals how the resurrected Christ fulfils all the long chapters in the Book of Leviticus. If God was eager to communicate with the Old Testament believers, how much more today is He ready to communicate with us! Once we allow Him to, then the pages of the Bible will be vibrant, and the dull pages will become alive. We can reread the story of David and Goliath, and suddenly, via our spiritual insight, we can tie the history to the events in the end times.

The disciples had no idea that Jesus would die at the hands of the elders, the princes of the priests (high priest) and the scribes. They were clustered in the Sanhedrin, their supreme council or court, in ancient Israel. The Sanhedrin comprised 70 men, in addition to the high priest, who served as its president. Its members were the chief priests, scribes and elders. The Sanhedrin had jurisdiction only over the province of Judea. They had their own police force and had the power to arrest people, as they did to Jesus Christ. The Jewish nation did execute Him.

Our Lord predicted His own crucifixion, knowing it would happen soon. He made some startling revelations. He said on the third day, He would make Israel alive again.

The third day is very prominent in the Scriptures, as altogether they appear more than 100 times in our Bible! Undoubtedly it is because the third day refers to one of the most important events in God’s salvation plan – it is the repentance of Israel. It is mere symbolism, as the number 3 is the promise, and on the third day the promises of Christ’s return will be realised. There are so many examples in the Old Testament, as the two men who returned to Emmaus on the third day. They should have remained in Jerusalem, knowing the importance of the third day. Indeed, the promises of Ephraim are relished in the Church today, but natural Israel needs to wait until the Day of the Lord (2000 years), and then only will they repent. The Book of Hosea speaks of these two days.

‘After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. ’

In the Book of Hosea, the name Israel appears 41 times, the name Ephraim 32 times and the name Judah only 15 times. Hosea was written after Israel disappeared into the Assyrian captivity, and strangely, Israel

(10 lost tribes of Israel) is mentioned nearly 500 times by the Old Testament prophets after Israel disappeared into the Assyrian captivity. For a reason, the name Israel and Ephraim do appear twice as frequently as the name Judah by the Old Testament prophets. Since the Jewish nation rejected Him, the thread of the story continues with Israel, as Judah got caught in the web of the law. Make NO mistake, the Old Testament prophets knew exactly who Israel was, who Ephraim was and who Judah was. They knew the firstborn right of all Israel was invested in Ephraim.
On this occasion, our Lord did speak clearly about the three days, thus on the previous occasions He did not speak clearly, in a language the disciples did not understand. Maybe previously He read the Book of Isaiah or the Psalms to them and used figures of speech or symbolism. On another occasion, moments before He was betrayed, the disciples spoke to Him, saying: ‘At last now you are speaking plainly to us and not figuratively.’ Previously He used metaphors, and He did not speak to them in plain language.
Peter rebuked Jesus when He mentioned His crucifixion, and I am not sure how he did it. He sensed the pessimism, but the Lord assured him it would happen, and He rebuked Peter, as he was carnally minded. He told him he had to study the Scriptures, as he was not knowledgeable about the things that interest God. It is like a game of chess. The art of chess strategy is to know what your opponent thinks, to formulate a plan. Our Lord understood the working of Satan, and He planned everything accordingly. The Apostle Peter was oblivious of Satan’s strategy. The death and resurrection of our Lord is part of God’s strategy, and the people who crucified Him are accountable, as is Judas Iscariot. The disciples were not prepared for the news. Even though Peter understood His words, he simply could not reconcile his view of the conquering Messiah with the suffering and death Jesus spoke of. Our Lord had to die to conquer Satan via His death.
The word Satan occurs 36 times in the New Testament, 18 times in the Gospels and Acts. The Greek word ‘satanas’ is a loan word from the Hebrew Old Testament. It is left untranslated, and in Hebrew the word is translated as 'adversary', while 'devil' is a translation of the Greek word 'diabolos', meaning a liar, an enemy or false accuser. Satan uses every opportunity to deviate man from the living God.
Peter had been trying to dissuade Jesus from going up to Jerusalem to die on the cross. Jesus turned and said to Peter: ‘Get thee behind me, Satan.’ Thus Peter was called a Satan. Our Lord blessed the Apostle Peter and later, in the same breath, He cursed him? Is that possible? Unwittingly, Peter was speaking for Satan. Like Jesus’ adversary, Peter was not setting his mind on the things of God—His ways, His plans and His purposes. Instead, his mind was set on the things of man, the things of the world and its earthly values. Jesus was saying that the way of the cross was God’s will, the plan of redemption for all mankind. Peter’s reaction was most likely shared by the other disciples. Peter was inadvertently being used by Satan, thinking he was protecting Jesus.
Purposely, Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness to divert Him from the cross, and his aim was to divert Jesus from fulfilling the grand design of

the Father for the Son. He tempted Jesus on the mountain for 40 days, thinking Jesus would accept his offer – to accept the kingdoms of the world. He had the option, and He was tempted to accept it. Our Lord will get the kingdoms of the world, but via His death and resurrection. Innocently, Peter was doing the same thing, saying his death would not happen. He didn't grasp Jesus' true Messianic purpose. Jesus explained that He had not come to establish an immediate earthly kingdom. The disciples were caught off guard with this new revelation. Even though Peter understood His words, he simply could not reconcile his view of the conquering Messiah with the death Jesus spoke of. The concept is for us to be born again – to be changed via His death and resurrection. There is no other means. If we try to hang on to our old life, we will lose it. But if we relinquish our life for His sake, we will save it. We can entrust our life to the Gospel or the new covenant and attain eternal life. What will it benefit us if we gain the whole world and lose our own soul?

Where in the Old Testament does it say plainly that our Lord would be crucified? Nowhere! It is written, but figuratively, via symbolism. The Jewish nation was inept to notice that the 'servant' in the Book of Isaiah did speak of the Messiah and not the Jewish nation. That is the danger of applying the Scripture to oneself. Whenever we study the Bible, our first question ought to be – what can it teach about Christ, and not how can it improve myself. They have no spiritual insight, as the truth cannot be revealed to them by flesh and blood, but by His Father in heaven (Matthew 16:17). If we are not centred on Christ, then everything will go awfully wrong. To be focused on ourselves will be devastating. We need to be focused on Christ alone and His kingdom. He promised this Gospel to us, and we are currently blessed with it. 'From Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle and appointed to spread the Gospel of God. God promised this Gospel through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures' (Romans 1:1–2). The Gospel is now on the table, and only Christ can open our eyes to clearly see it – if we are willing to accept Him in faith. The message given to Abraham is that all the nations of the world will be blessed through him. The message given to Jeremiah is that He will make a new covenant with the nation of Israel – both Abraham and Jeremiah prophesied prematurely. The birth of the new covenant is with Christ's resurrection from the dead and not earlier.

Christ is the substance of the new covenant, and we will receive eternal life, and the old will be exchanged for the new. We are created from the first Adam, and now in Christ we are born again.

What is the sense if we gain the whole world and lose our own soul? The Apostle Paul says He is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16). Peacefully, we can accept the decay of our bodies, and our enemies may even speed this process, causing a violent death! We will never lose anything. The inner man blossoms into new youth, beauty and strength day by day. Our strength is not hindered by the tribulations we endure each day. It is a blessing to be persecuted, to carry His cross. We will not be persecuted if we do teach the law, teaching people how to improve themselves. The message of the cross is to forsake the old and to embrace the new.

‘Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ’ (Galatians 6:12). It is either the law or the principle of grace, the leaven or no leaven inside the bread. The Jewish nation refused to accept the principle of the cross, and the religious leaders today motivate us to better ourselves. It is senseless, as our hope is tied to the new creation in Christ and not the old. The message of the cross is to exchange our old life for the new and not to patch the old.
‘I have often told you, and now tell you with tears in my eyes, that many live as the enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things’ (Philippians 3:18–19). The Apostle Paul addresses Christians, and he encourages them not to block their earthly minds, to allow the free flow of God’s Spirit in their lives. No one pours new wine into old wineskins, as the new cannot tolerate the old. The new covenant is the total new creation, as the old is crucified. The seed died beneath the soil, and the surprise is the sprouting plant. It is like a butterfly who will never return to his old cocoon.

Mark 8:34–38
And calling the multitude unto him with his disciples, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life (psyche) shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life (psyche) for my sake and the Gospel’s, the same shall save it. 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (psyche) 38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.
If we want to make a success of our life, then we need to follow Christ to bear much fruit. It invites persecution, but in the end we will be paid handsomely. To be a ‘Rockefeller’ will not benefit us, or to sway the world to our liking. At the end, we lose our own soul. There seems to be great confusion touching the word ‘soul.’ It is mentioned in the first few pages of the Bible. It says man became a living soul once the breath of God was blown into his nostrils (Genesis 2:7). Life is preserved once the Spirit of God is inside of us.
Most Christians are steered by the many Greek philosophers who try to prove otherwise. We need to study the word ‘soul’ in the Hebrew text to define it correctly. There are 753 occurrences of the word 'soul' in the Hebrew text, and they do not agree with our common understanding of the word. For example, the Scriptures say our souls can die, touch, eat, be thirsty or even go hungry. The word for 'soul' in the Old Testament is ‘nephesh.’ In the New Testament, the word for 'soul' is ‘psyche’ (105 references). The Greeks maintain the soul is not the complete human being but only a part of him. We don't have a 'soul' but we are a soul. It is much simpler than what the theologians believe. The soul is our practical life or our walk on earth, and we can decide how to live our lives. We are

urged not to lose our soul, or else we will be found ‘naked’ for all eternity. If our aim in life is to become rich or famous at the expense of our ‘soul,’ then our life is meaningless.
Mainstream Christians believe once we die, we have a separate ‘soul’ that detaches from our body once we die. It continues to live on. The non-believers are lost and will go to ‘hell’, and the saved will die to go to heaven. The immortal-soul concept isn't part of the Old Testament, but from a Greek culture, embraced by both the Jews and mainstream Christianity. According to popular belief, we were given a soul that lives for all eternity. The Bible teaches us differently, as we became a ‘living soul’ with the breath of God (Genesis 2:7). So what does the Bible say will happen to our spirit once we die? 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return' (Genesis 3:19). We are formed from the dirt of the earth, and only the breath of God keeps us going. Without the breath of God inside of us, we are dust! We were not given a soul, but we are living souls until we stop breathing. Our souls are not eternal; it’s a bluff sold by Satan to Eve in the Garden of Eden. Satan promised Eve she would become eternal (Genesis 3:4). God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden to keep them away from the tree of life (Genesis 3:22–24). God loved Adam and Eve and realised it was for their own good; He forbade them to eat from the tree of life, to live forever in a sinful condition. Adam or Eve did not eat the fruit from the tree of life after they disobeyed God!
Will Adam, or any transgressor, continue living forever and ever? Man (our soul) is not immortal in any way. Man, in his fallen condition, does not have eternal life. Our eternal life depends upon whether or not we eat from the tree of life. ‘Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city’ (Revelation 22:14). Surely these verses do not include those who rejected God’s free gift of salvation.
The Bible compares death to sleeping more than 50 times. After death, natural man falls asleep; they are unconscious and they are not aware of the passing of time or of what is going on around them. That is what death is like. The Bible says, ‘for the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing… their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished’ (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 146:4). It makes sense, as after Lazarus was raised from the dead, he had nothing to share; he did not reveal the ‘after-death’ as many do. When we die, we return to dust and await the second coming of Jesus, when He will resurrect us. We do not have an immortal soul, because only Christ Jesus has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16). It is only through Him that we can gain immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53). We who accepted Christ as our Saviour are born again, and that new life can never die. The non-believers will die (sleep) to be punished on the last day, and we who accepted Christ will NEVER die or see death. Whenever we die, our new born-again life will vanish to be with Christ.
The salvation of our soul is one of the most contested topics in our Bible. Contrary to common belief, the salvation of the soul has nothing to do

with our eternal destiny. Our eternal salvation is settled with Christ's finished work at Calvary. Let me explain.
It says 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved'. It is made possible through Christ (Acts 16:31).
But the salvation of the soul is dealt with after an entirely different fashion in Scripture. Christ's past work for us at Calvary is accomplished – we are born – but now the new life needs to develop. We can solely depend on Christ's present work for us as our High Priest in heaven. Today it is not the humiliated Jesus on the cross, but the resurrected Christ in heaven. The salvation of our souls is accomplished by the resurrected and not the crucified. It is a great concern for Christians alone, and the unsaved people are out of the equation.
Presently, Christ is our High Priest in heaven, to cleanse us from sin to equip us to be called both kings and priests. Christ's present work relates to the saving of our souls, to mature us. There is nothing more encouraging for a mother than to notice the development of her child. It is a grave concern if they don't.
Scripture deals with the salvation of the soul, and it touches our present faithfulness as Christians, and this salvation will be realised only at the end of one's faith, with the rapture of the Church (1 Peter 1:9). That salvation is associated with rewards, when Christ returns (Hebrews 10:35–39). We need to clear the table – meaning we need to get rid of all the filth and the evil in our lives, to humbly accept the Word of God, which is planted inside of our hearts, for it has the power to save our souls. They are the souls of Christians who did 'pass from death unto life', the only ones to be in a position to receive 'the implanted Word' (James 1:21).
Christians talk about soul-winning with regard to the unsaved. But that is not the way Scripture deals with the subject. Soul-winning, as seen in Scripture, has to do with reaching those who already possess eternal life, those who have a redeemed spirit or those who did 'pass from death unto life', not touching those who are still 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Soul-winning is not to accept the free gift of eternal life, as it was dealt with in the past. It relates to our faithfulness, resulting in good works. There is a just recompense, and we will be rewarded handsomely in the coming kingdom of Christ. Soul-winning is reaching Christians with the Word, to those who have already believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The issue is the salvation of our souls.
To summarise, we need to agree that 'salvation' in the Word of God is spoken of in three different tenses — past, present and future:

1. We have been saved.
2. We are being saved.
3. We are about to be saved.
4. The past aspect of our salvation is dealt with in Ephesians 2:8: 'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.' Salvation in this verse is wrought by grace alone through faith, accomplished in the past, and we are blessed with eternal life. Christ's resurrected life accomplished this.

5. ‘For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God’ (1 Corinthians 1:18). The present aspect of our salvation is presented in an entirely different light, as seen in Ephesians 2:8. We are redeemed with Christ’s death and resurrection, but our salvation has yet to be completed. The Apostle Paul tells the Philippians, 2:12–13: ‘work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you.’ Here we see salvation presented as something being worked upon in synergy with God. It is not all over and done with. Note the implication of this question: ‘How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?’ (Hebrews 2:1–3). Another telling statement: ‘be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure’ (2 Peter 1:10).
6. Hebrews 1:14 deals with the future aspect of our salvation: ‘Aren't they (angels) all serving spirits, sent out to do service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?’ Here our salvation is presented in a completely different light. Here nothing is written in the past or present; as our future is at stake. Our inherited salvation pertains to those who have already been saved, those who are no longer alienated from God but they are His family members. The Apostle Paul says twice, ‘we shall be saved’ (Romans 5:9–10). There too it is neither past nor present, but future. He makes another interesting statement: ‘Our salvation is now nearer than when we first believed’ (Romans 13:11). The Holy Spirit is given ‘as a guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession’ (Ephesians 1:14). Here redemption and our eternal inheritance is at stake, something yet future. The Apostle Paul speaks of ‘the hope of salvation’ (1 Thessalonians 5:8). A hope of salvation implies a future salvation.

In this respect, the complete scope of our salvation — past, present and future — has a beginning, and it will end.

Christians will be judged on the basis of their works, and there will be a sure way of knowing it.

‘But if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or stubble; each man's work will be revealed. For the Day will declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself will test what sort of work each man's work is’ (1 Corinthians 3:12–13).

Works comparable to ‘gold, silver and precious stones’ will last in the fire, and it will reveal the works we did in faith. Works done outside the scope of our faith will be devoured in flames, and it is comparable to ‘wood, hay, stubble.’ There is nothing to be rewarded. Their complete life was wasted. The unperishable goods like gold will harvest a great reward (v. 14), but the Christians who did meet our Lord empty-handed will suffer ‘loss’ (v. 15). The word ‘loss’ in 1 Corinthians 3:15 is translated from the same Greek word as ‘lose’ in Mark 8:36, ‘be cast away’ in Luke 9:25, and ‘I have suffered the loss’ in Philippians 3:8. The thought behind the word ‘lose’ is to ‘forfeit’ something already in their possession. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, the loss is seen as the loss of one’s soul. That is exactly what is in view in 1 Corinthians 3:15. They will have no reward, forfeiting all their

chances in life. He will live, but all his works will be burned. His life is a total loss, and he will lose his soul.
A cross-reference to Mark 8:36 is Psalm 49:17: ‘For when they die, they take nothing with them. Their wealth will not follow them into the grave.’ Our ‘souls’ will die, and whatever wealth we amassed on earth will be left behind. Foolishly, some noble people were accustomed to bury their wealth with them in their grave, eager to take it with them to the other world.
‘What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ (v. 37). No money on earth can redeem a person, or to be given to God as a ransom (Psalm 49:7). The Churches are very rich today, and the people who gave it to them thought their possessions could secure eternal life.
We know we were redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver (money) or gold, from a useless way of life handed down from our fathers (1 Peter 1:18). No money on earth can secure our redemption. The tabernacle stood on silver, as it epitomises our redemption in Christ. In the tabernacle, the gold-plated boards (panels) which supported the linen and goats’ hair curtains were secured on 96 silver sockets. If we add the 4 silver sockets upon which the 4 gold-covered pillars stood, at the entrance to the ‘most holy’, the number of silver sockets totals 100. The whole massive framework of the tabernacle stood upon the atonement-money (silver) paid by the hosts of Israel. Each Israelite will agree that the tabernacle rested on the ransom-money (silver), and it is the redemption of his soul. The tabernacle had three entrances, and the first was the gate 5 x 20 cubits (100 cubits). Both the door leading to the sanctuary and the door to the inner Sanctuary were 10 x 10 cubits (100). Thus each of the three entrances was 100 cubits square. Symbolically speaking, the 100 is to enter the kingdom. Christ paid the price.
Our high calling.
My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19–20). Can a backslider return to Christ? Yes, as our eternal security proves to be unchanging in the last two verses of the Book of James. They confirm the righteous can die spiritually (and return to Jesus again for salvation). Sadly, few people are aware of these verses, and they are never taught.
This passage mentions the possibility of brethren straying from the truth (or backsliding) and what effects their actions will have on their souls. Firstly, we know the backsliding person is a Christian, and they were called brethren, which is further explained in James 2:1, where the same words are used to identify the true believers in the Lord Jesus. If the ones (the Christians) who strayed are brought back to where they were before, their souls would be saved from death. It is crystal clear that James is writing about people who returned to their old ways, to people who are genuinely saved. They strayed from the truth. Jesus is the truth (John 14:6) ; hence, they will be straying from the Lord. If he repents, his soul, which was in jeopardy of eternal death, would no longer be in danger, and the multitude of sins that he committed will not be remembered.

‘Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling’ (Philippians 2:12). We need to embrace the Word of God, so when Christ returns, we will be proud of what we did, knowing we did not run the race in vain, and our works were not useless (Philippians 2:16). The subject is the salvation of our soul, and our life is constantly moulded by what we do, read and watch.
The Apostle Paul wrote some final true words to Timothy: ‘However, continue in what you have learned and found to be true. You know who your teachers were. From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures. They have the power to give you wisdom so that you can be saved through faith in Christ Jesus’ (2 Timothy 3:14–15). The Apostle Paul continues to say God has given us the inspired Bible to enable us to accurately know that which is good, true and holy, so that we might know the mind and will of God. Thus we are equipped to teach, correct, rebuke and train in righteousness. It will equip us to save our souls! It will make us grow. Timothy was saved, and yet the Apostle Paul told him to be saved? Yes, it is his soul, and he too needed to run the race.
Paul speaks of the salvation of his soul – his walk on earth; the Apostle Paul says he did not reach perfection as yet. He presses on to possess that perfection, striving to lay hold of the prize which Christ attained for him (Philippians 3:12). We are born of God and are born perfect, but we need to develop. Whenever a child is born, the mother is curious to know whether he or she is fine, if there are no defects. With our new birth in the new creation, we are born perfect, but we need to grow to reach maturity. It takes time.
‘Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels’ (v. 38). If we are ashamed of the Word of God, then we can expect the same response from our Lord. That person will be saved, but his soul is lost. He amassed nothing for all eternity. If any person covers or smoulders the Word of God, Christ too will be ashamed of us. He will come with His holy angels, as in Daniel 7:10: ‘Thousands and thousands served him.’ We get a taste of that glory in the next chapter. The glory was reflected on the mount of His glorification. Only three of His twelve disciples accompanied Him, and why? His kingdom did come, and we are aware of it, but to the nine (world) He is dead, unaware of the glory we now envisage. If we suffer with Him, we will be glorified with Him as on the mount.
The Apostle Paul summarises everything very appropriately with the words:
‘Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. The saying is trustworthy, for
if we have died with him, we will also live with him;
if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;

if we are faithless, he remains faithful— He cannot deny himself' (2 Timothy 2:10–13). If we deny Him, He will never get rid of us or let us go out of His hand. We need to live from the Word of God, and it is the only food we need. We are in the desert, and our manna is falling from heaven. We are part of a very big puzzle, and we need to remain faithful to Him. God wants to prove something very special – previously our bodies used to obey Satan, and now we are changed to glorify God, owing to His Word that is inside of us.

Mark 9:1–8
He also said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there are some of those who are here who shall not taste of death until they have seen the kingdom of God which comes with power. 2 And six days afterwards Jesus took Peter and James and John, and separated them apart by themselves unto a high mountain; and he was transfigured before them. 3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them. 4 And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter answering, said unto Jesus, Master, it shall be good for us to remain here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for thee, and another for Moses, and another for Elijah. 6 For he knew not what he was saying, for he was beside himself. 7 And a cloud came that overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; hear ye him. 8 And suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one any more, except Jesus only with themselves.
The vision the Apostle Peter had of our Lord on the mount made a great imprint on his life. He often spoke of his experience on that day, as in many of his writings. He can confidently say that since Christ's death and resurrection, everything became clear to him, and to us who believe, as we are established in the present truth (1 Peter 1:12). Whatever the topics of the prophets were in the Old Testament, it is now made known to us. Since Christ's resurrection, the Apostle Peter had the freedom to express the truths he experienced on the Mount of the Transfiguration, and even the angels desired to look into them (2 Peter 1:12). He frankly speaks about his experience on the mount, and he said he did not base his message on clever myths that were fabricated. Rather, he witnessed His splendour with his own eyes. Peter, John and James (the three disciples who accompanied our Lord to the Mount of the Transfiguration) witnessed the glory Jesus received from God the Father, when God spoke, saying: 'This is my Son, whom I love and in whom I delight.' The three disciples heard God's voice from heaven. With confidence, the Apostle Peter confirms indeed they have the prophetic word, and they will do well to heed it, as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:16–21). 'We have the prophetic word confirmed.' The Word of God is more certain than what men (even the apostles) saw and heard. The Apostle Peter is making two points. His first issue concerns the

witness and testimony he saw (vv. 16–19), the things they experienced with their own eyes. They witnessed the fulfilment of all the Old Testament prophecies regarding His first coming. Peter, James and John saw Jesus Christ transfigured before them. They heard the voice of God the Father from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ In other words, Peter is saying the ‘voice’ confirmed the Old Testament prophecies regarding Christ.
Verses 20 and 21 concern something more vital than their eyewitness account. That something is the nature of prophecy itself. It is the Scriptures as a whole. Notice how

Peter says it: ‘knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture. . .’ Prophecy is a part of Scripture, so what is true of prophecy is true of Scripture as a whole. ‘Knowing this first,’ he says, ‘that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.
’How we study Scripture determines what sort of Christian we are. Are we Christ-centred and true, or man-centred and fake? Our churches’ history was torn by these two verses, and they were the centre point of every division. Many false Christians deem it improper to interpret the Bible for themselves. Only the ‘church’ can interpret the Scriptures. To be precise, it is the reason why there are more than 39,000 different Protestant sects in the world today.
‘No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.’ I believe in the universal priesthood of all believers, not just a certain class of men who are called priests. The theologians today encourage us to go to church or attend seminaries to become priests, but sadly they are not taught the Bible, but spend years studying church tradition. ‘Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.’ Why should we pay attention to Scripture? The answer is that Scripture is not a mere collection of the words and ideas of men. It did not originate in man’s understanding of things. The Bible is not to record man’s views, man’s perspectives or man’s interpretation of events. Man did not decide what is true and what is not true. ‘Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.’ No person or any church can interpret the Scripture in their own wisdom, thinking their intelligence will make sense of Scripture. We need to be guided by God, who reveals the meaning of every word, and the means is to constantly compare each word in Scripture with another passage of Scripture. The Spirit of God will lead us. Our interpretation of Scripture is sound if we are guided by the Spirit of God. Our IQ is not in the formula. A twisting rope (cord) is woven or joined together by millions of thin threads. The more strands that are twisted or woven together in a rope, the greater is its strength. When a rope is stretched, like pulling a load, it stretches. The individual strands are pulled closer to each other. No one individual strand will ever do the work. If it did, it would snap. A rope’s strength comes from all the strands working together. Similarly, we constantly need to bond with the other Christians to study His Word, or

else we are loose fibres swept by the wind, interpreting the Scriptures our own way.
I firmly believe that since Adam, the Bible is written, and it is the totally inspired Word of God. It was written by men, and it was saved in many archives. At times, people forgot where the archives were, as during the time of the kings (2 Kings 22), yet they did find them again. Adam was the first writer. The word ‘the history or the generations’ in the Book of Genesis is translated from the Hebrew word ‘toldah’ (Strong’s no. 8435). Once Adam finished writing, as he was led by God, he signed them off with the words: ‘This is the book of the generations (Strong’s no. 8435) of Adam’ (Genesis 5:1). The Hebrew word ‘generations’ is found 13 times in the Book of Genesis.
The Book of Genesis has many writers, and the first is God (Genesis 2:4) ; Adam (5:1) ; Noah (6:9) ; the three sons of Noah (10:1) ; Shem (11:10) ; Terah (11:27) ; Ishmael (25:12) ; Isaac (25:19) ; Esau (36:1, 9) ; Jacob (37:2) ; and Joseph (50:25).
As the firstborn, God endowed the above writers to record their history, and they were signed by the word ‘generations’. They are the words in the Book of the Law. Moses archived them safely, and with the exodus of Israel from Egypt, they took all their belongings, including the archives. God told them nothing of their belongings had to remain in Egypt. Moses had a special archive for the Book of the Law, and they were placed beside the Ark of the Covenant, where the ten commandments or the two tablets of stone were. Moses wrote four books, including the Book of Deuteronomy, that was written shortly before his death. They were all placed beside the Ark.
The Old Testament was not written when the Jewish nation was in the Babylonian captivity (3400 years since Adam) or during the time of Moses (2400 years since Adam). Most theologians agree that the canon of the Torah (five Books of Moses) to its present form was compiled during the time of Ezra (around 445 B. C.). No, never—God was not silent but revealed Himself to Adam, and He did speak many times and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets (Hebrews 1:1). Noah was also a prophet. The sure prophetic Word is not the ‘law,’ as Adam and Noah had the sure prophetic Word, but they didn’t have the ‘law.’ When the disciples lived with our Lord on earth, they lived during the time of the Old Testament, but the Gospels were written after Christ’s resurrection from the dead.
The best means to study the Bible is by placing one verse next to the other. It is a worthwhile exercise to compare Mark 9 with the other Gospels, like Matthew and Luke, and then we will have a greater insight. It is common sense.
The first question that usually crops up is: was Jesus transfigured six or eight days after prophesying that some would live to see the establishment of the kingdom (Matthew 16:28–17:2; Luke 9:27–29) ?At first glance, it appears that Luke contradicts Matthew and Mark’s account on the days that lapsed between Christ’s prophecy and His transfiguration. However, a closer examination reveals that Luke never intended his readers to understand that it was exactly eight 24-hour

periods that lapsed from the moment Jesus finished His prophecy to the time when He ascended the mount. Luke says it was ‘about eight days,’ not exactly eight days. Luke was a physician (Colossians 4:14), and he did not break the time down exactly. It seems clear that both Matthew and Mark excluded the days when they left and the day when they arrived at the Mount of the Transfiguration. This is no new thought. If someone went to jail for three days, then the day when he arrives is day one; he will spend the complete second day in jail, but he will leave in the morning or afternoon on the third day. Likewise, the time difference between Matthew, Mark and Luke is in no way a legitimate Bible contradiction. Luke simply calculated the time they left and arrived, whereas Matthew and Mark counted only complete days. This helps us to understand that exactly one week transpired between the time when He said He would be killed, to be raised three days later from the dead, until the Mount of the Transfiguration. Indeed, since His resurrection, we see Him glorified as on the Mount of the Transfiguration. The Book of Hebrews 2:9 says, but we now see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels (for a little while), now crowned with glory and honour.

Isn’t it strange that only three disciples accompanied our Lord to the Mount of the Transfiguration, and the remaining disciples were left behind to confront Satan, and they had no power to heal the sick? We too need to make a decision – do we want to be with Christ on the mount to see His glory, or be left on earth confronting Satan? If we are Christ-centred, then we will accompany our Lord to the mount; and if we are self-centred, then we will battle with Satan and lose the battle.

The three disciples who did accompany our Lord saw the glorified Lord, and they were the remnant amongst the disciples, but the nine disciples who remained at the foothills of the mountain were defeated.

On more occasions, the disciples Peter, James and John are banded together in the Gospels. When He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead, ‘Peter, James and John’ were the only disciples allowed to enter the room (Mark 5:37). Jesus took the three disciples with Him deeper into the Garden of Gethsemane than He did to the other disciples (Mark 14:33). Peter denied Jesus, but Judas betrayed Him to be crucified. Both Judas and Peter portray the Jewish nation, and the difference is Peter repented and acknowledged Christ’s deity. Peter had the calling to preach the Gospel to the Jews (Galatians 2:7–8).

The Apostle John portrays the ten lost tribes of Israel. James and John were brothers, and the two together picture the Church, as the two men on the way to Emmaus. The two are endowed with the firstborn right.

When Peter and John heard what Mary had to say about the empty tomb, Peter ran first to the grave, and he was followed by the more agile and younger John, who outran him, arriving at the tomb some moments before Peter. When John got there, he leaned down and peered into the tomb, but did not go in. He saw the linen clothes that were used to bind the dead body of Jesus, but nothing else. When Peter arrived, he did not hesitate, but went straight into the tomb, alone. There was no one there. He saw the linen strips, but no Jesus in the tomb. Who got there first? Was it Peter or the two tribes of Israel? Jesus first acquainted Himself with the Jewish

nation, and they were the first to respond to the Gospel (Acts 2). Soon afterwards, John went into the tomb, and he portrays the lost tribes of Israel, who also responded to the Gospel.

Jesus took His three disciples with Him to the mountain. In the Book of Matthew, we have seven occasions when our Lord went to the mountains. Jesus going to the mountain is to portray Himself as our High Priest. On one occasion, He went to the mountains, but His disciples had to weather the storm on a boat to portray our dispensation. On the other two occasions when the mountain was mentioned by our Lord, as in Matthew 17:20 and 21:21, Jesus talked about the kingdoms of the earth. The kingdoms of the earth are like the mountains, and they will be cast into the seas. Isaiah 40:3–4 spoke of them: 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.' Once Israel accepts our Lord as Saviour, then every kingdom on earth will be humiliated, to pave the way for Christ's promised Millennium. The mountains will not be flattened literally, but figuratively it will.

The Lord on the mountain is to portray the glorified Christ in heaven. We have no idea where the Mount of the Transfiguration is. Is it not Sinai? I am fascinated knowing the Bible is one continuing interwoven story. The writer to the Hebrews had a mind that was marinated in Old Testament detail. In the original text, the Book of Hebrews quotes a total of 737 words from the Old Testament, which amounts to about 15% of its complete content.

One unbelievable example is detailed in the similarities between Moses' trip to Mount Sinai in Exodus 24 and Jesus' experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. Let's take a look at these two stories and see if possibly Jesus, the second Moses, was emulating and fulfilling what had happened to Moses himself during the Exodus. At this point, it would be helpful to take the extra time to study all accounts of both stories.

• In both stories, the main character ascends a high mountain to meet with God.

• In both stories, three men go with the main character. Moses takes Joshua, Aaron and Hur, and Jesus takes Peter, James and John.

• In both cases, a cloud covered the mountain.

• In Exodus 24:16, it says, 'For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses.' In both Matthew and Mark, the gospel writers are careful to tell us that it was six days that Jesus took the disciples upon the mountain.

• In both stories, nothing happened for six days, and then on the seventh day, God spoke.

• In both stories, God spoke from the cloud.

• In both stories, God's glory appeared and changed or transfigured the appearance of Moses and Jesus, as they were spoken to by God (Exodus 34:29–30).

• The glory of God ‘settled’ on both mountains (Exodus 24:16; Mark 9:7). The Hebrew word for settle or dwell is ‘shakan’ (Strong’s no. 7931), and it means ‘to settle or inhabit like a tent.’

Is it possible that Peter realised that Jesus was reconstructing the Moses story? Is he thinking, ‘What can we do to bring “shakan-like glory” to the Moses story?’ So he says, ‘Let’s build something temporary (like shakan) – let’s put up some tents to duplicate the Sinai experience.’ Peter wasn’t just trying to think of something to do; he knew the story! Moses saw the glory, and he designed the tabernacle; and likewise, the Apostle Peter wanted to design something.

Further proof that Jesus was fulfilling His role as the second Moses is found in Deuteronomy 18:15, where God tells Moses that ‘He will raise up another Prophet that will be like me’ and then says, ‘Listen to Him.’ These are the exact same words that God uses at the transfiguration: ‘This is my Son, listen to Him’ (Matthew 17:5).

Mount Sinai or any high mountain portrays the heavens, and what is expected of our Lord to do on the mount? He prays there to intercede for us as our High Priest. To pray, in the broadest meaning of the word, is to be subservient to God. That explains why we need to pray (be subservient to God) at all places and at all times. It is a way of life, to be meek. One of the questions most often asked about prayer is: Why should we pray when God already knows our needs? Why tell God what He already knows or ask Him to do what He already plans to do? We don’t need to understand prayer in order to pray.

The reason to pray is to invite God into our lives, to communicate with Him. It’s very important to understand this: we are inviting God into our lives when we pray. When we pray, we have fellowship with our fellow believers. We become ‘workers together with Him’ (2 Corinthians 6:1). When we pray, we are co-administrators of His kingdom, His affairs, working together with Him. He could do everything without us, but we are invited guests. We can’t do anything without Him, but it is a great privilege to do things with Him! Prayer binds us to God. That’s why we tell God the things He already knows. It is not to impress or inform God, but to invite God to have fellowship with Him, to grow and to learn to depend upon Him. There are two wrong motives to pray:

- Don’t pray to impress God. We are not heard for our ‘much speaking.’ Like children speaking to their father, we too can speak to our God. We’re told to cry out to Him as our ‘Abba’ Father—literally translated, ‘Daddy’ (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).
- Secondly, we don’t pray to inform God. You can’t tell God anything He already knows.

Howbeit, Christ did ascend the mountain to pray for us. He is our High Priest, and His prayer for us is defined in Romans 8:26. The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for, and therefore the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. The Spirit prays for us silently, without a voice. A few verses on, in v. 34, we read that Christ Jesus intercedes for us. What puzzles many is: who prays for us? Is it the Spirit or is it Christ Jesus? They both do, as the Spirit is Christ Jesus. In this chapter, we have the

• Spirit,
• Spirit of God,
• Spirit of Christ Jesus,
• Christ.

‘But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, because the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, that person is not of him. But if Christ is in you, the body is truly dead because of sin, but the Spirit is alive because of righteousness’ (vv. 9–10).

We don’t have the ‘trinity’ dwelling inside of us to intercede for us. No, the risen Christ is the Spirit and God. Our Lord is placed in heaven to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25), and His present glory and work is pictured when He is glorified on the mount. Spiritually, we see what the Apostle Peter saw on the mount.

In Exodus 17, the children of Israel had to fight the Amalekites. Then there were also three men who went to the mount, and they were: Moses, who epitomises Christ; Aaron, who was the high priest (Hebrews 5) ; and finally Hur, who epitomises the Spirit. In Hebrew, the name Hur is tied to the Spirit or Ruach. Hur, written back to front, is Ruach. Moses was 120 years old, and Aaron and Hur had to raise Moses’ hand due to his old age. The three men on the mountain picture the glorified Christ in our dispensation. On the mountain, Jesus’ face brightened up as the sun, and yet He looked human. His dazzling glory equalled the sun shining in its full strength. The garments on His body were as white as light, and it pierced every cell of His body and garments. Mark says His clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach (fuller) could do. Snow has a peculiar whiteness to it, and therefore it is mentioned to express the glittering brightness of Christ’s raiment; Christ’s garments were whiter than white – whiter than humanly feasible.

In biblical times, wool and fleece were smelly, soiled garments with many impurities. To counter this problem, the woollen industries used to soak pieces of cloth in some alkaline solution and then agitate it in a trough or vat containing a slurry of Fuller’s Earth. A particular kind of clay was used for cleaning woollen cloth, and the process of cleansing and thickening cloth is known as ‘fulling’, and a person engaged in its trade and practice is called a ‘fuller.’ Several rinses with clean running water were given to remove the earth, which carried away with it and flushed away most of the grease, dirt, smell and impurities in the wool or linen.

The high priest (Leviticus 16) wore linen cloths, and he exchanged all his brightly coloured clothing on the Great Day of Atonement. Then he entered the inner Sanctuary to reconcile all Israel. Only on that day was the high priest allowed to enter the inner Sanctuary, as it was forbidden on all the other feast days. The priest’s white linen garment symbolises the new birth. White linen symbolises the new creation, in contrast to the wool, to communicate the old man. The linen advocates the resurrection as well as the new life that emanates from it. Jesus, dressed in linen, is to portray Him as the risen Christ. The 24 elders in the Book of Revelation 4:4 resemble the Church, and the clue is the white linen cloths. The white linen suggests rebirth and the resurrection, since the raw cotton is beaten and processed from the beginning to the end. The Lord Jesus used a linen

robe to wash His disciples' feet. We too will be noticed by the white linen garments once we do appear with Christ in glory.
Moses ascended Mount Sinai twice. The first time he returned, there was a coup in the camp, and publicly he shattered the two stone tablets. He pulverised their idol and made them drink it. The second time he came down the mountain carrying new tablets, something bizarre happened. Everyone was terrified, and they kept their distance. Something was happening to Moses' appearance. Most of our English translations use words like 'shining' or 'radiant' to describe what the Israelites saw. The Hebrew word translated 'shone' (Strong's no. 7160) in Exodus 34:29, 30 and 35 is a word that is only found one more time in the Old Testament. In Psalm 69:31, it is a verbal noun that means 'horns'. 'This will please the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs. '
Jerome's Latin Vulgate translated Exodus 34 as 'his face was horned'. Because of this, much of the Medieval and Renaissance artwork, as in Michelangelo's famous statue of Moses, prefers to portray Moses with horns. There is a parallel between God's glory spreading like light and God's horns being raised high. This word seems to be the root of the word commonly translated as 'horns'. Horns in biblical times, especially in the Books of Daniel and Revelation, express strength, power and authority. So whatever the actual physical or visual phenomenon, the word 'horns' is used to define authority, God restoring His authority to His mediator Moses. Habakkuk uses the related word for horns in what seems to be a very figurative way.
'God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendour covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. Selah. His brightness was like the light; rays (horns) (Strong's no. 7161) flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power' (Habakkuk 3:3–4). Where in Scripture can we tie Jesus Christ with both Moses and Elijah?
• 40 days of fasting.
Throughout all of Bible history, there are only three recorded people who fasted for 40 days. They are Jesus, Moses and Elijah. The events of those three men, despite them living centuries apart, have strong connections. In the history of Moses and Elijah, they completed their 40-day fasts at Mount Sinai (also known as Mount Horeb). Both Moses and Elijah sheltered in the rock of Mount Sinai. It reminds us of the hymn: Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee!
• Moses: He was with the Lord for 40 days and 40 nights; he neither ate bread nor did he drink water (Exodus 34:28–29)
. • Elijah: And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you. And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb the mount of God. And there he came to a cave and lodged there (1 Kings 19:7–9).
• Jesus Christ: 'Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to Him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall

worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. ’” Then the devil left him’ (Matthew 4:1–11).

• Revelation 11. In the first half of Daniel’s 70th week, or during the first 3½ years of the great tribulation, Jerusalem will sign a treaty with the Antichrist, but the peace will last for only 3½ years.

Then God will empower His two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 3½ years, clothed in sackcloth (Revelation 11:3). To get everything in perspective, we need to learn that after the rapture of the Church, no believers will remain on earth, except for the two witnesses. God will always allow two or more witnesses to remain on earth. ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established’ (2 Corinthians 13:1). The two witnesses were clothed in sackcloth. Their clothing pictures the grief Israel will endure. Their message will be very similar to the message of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and the Jewish nation is strongly advised to flee Israel to escape to Petra. The two witnesses will warn the people of Israel of the impending dangers that will face them. Some Jewish people will repent, and they will flee to Petra during the first 3½ years of Daniel’s 70th week. God will not allow His remnant to be harmed during a relative time of peace, but once the two witnesses are murdered, then the real tribulation will commence for Israel. John was curious to know who the two men were. He was told they are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth (Revelation 11:4). John ties this prophecy to the fourth chapter of Zechariah! He continues: ‘And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. They can shut the heavens to cause a famine, and they can change the water into blood. They have the power to strike the earth with different plagues, as often as they wish’ (Revelation 11:5–6). It resembles the time of Moses, as during his time he had the power to turn the water into blood.

When Elijah was on earth, it did not rain for 3½ years, and it is not written in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament; once it was spoken by our Lord (Luke 4:25) and then by the Apostle James (5:17). To me, the two men are Moses and Elijah. These men are ‘the sons of the fresh oil’ – olive oil! Meaning they are filled with God’s Holy Spirit. The words ‘two anointed ones’ is better rendered as the ‘two sons of fresh oil.’ They will be anointed by God to be His end-time prophets who will rebuke kings and nations! The two witnesses are detailed in Zechariah 4, and they are the two olive trees. We cannot study Zechariah 4 without the prior knowledge of the Book of Revelation; if we don’t, we will never recognise the real truth. The New and the Old Testament are closely tied. Zechariah 4 commences when an angel roused Zechariah after a long sleep. Throughout the prophecies, and especially in the Book of Daniel, when a prophet sleeps, then his message depicts our dispensation of grace, or the time of God’s mystery as it is unfolded today. Once the Church disappears to heaven, then both Moses and Elijah will light up a very dark world. The light is the very Words of God during the great tribulation. Zechariah 4, 5 and 6 teaches us plainly that the two olive trees depict the High Priest and King, as all the chapters of the Book of Zechariah are interwoven with that

subject. See my notes on Zechariah. When the two witnesses complete their testimony, the beast that came from the abyss will make war on them and kill them (Revelation 11:7). After 3½ years, or when the idol will be erected in Jerusalem, then the two witnesses will die and lie in the streets. The people will be jubilant, but it will be short-lived. The street is the plain in Jerusalem or the temple plain, as there the idols will be erected. Time then is of the essence. The people of Israel need to flee in a great hurry if they don't want to be trapped for 3½ years in a besieged Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be called Sodom and Egypt. After 3½ days, the two witnesses stood on their feet, and they ascended on the clouds into heaven. They are part of the Church, and we too, as Christ will ascend to heaven to meet our Lord in the air.

• With Christ's ascension into heaven.

When Christ ascended into heaven on the Mount of Olives, two men stood at the place where He ascended into heaven. Possibly they were Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:30). Who else visited Mount Sinai?

• Paul was on Mount Sinai, as the Jewish nation deceived him. He went to Arabia, and what happened there? I don't know, but in the Book of Galatians 4:25, he says Sinai is in Arabia. That made me think that the Apostle Paul did ascend Mount Sinai in Arabia to see what Moses saw. He was caught up into the third heaven, and we know what he experienced. Elijah and Moses had the same vision. The Apostle Paul saw the glory, and he shared the marvels we presently enjoy in Christ. Moses saw the glory, and he took the people to the Promised Land. Today, our Lord has given us a better homeland in heaven, and the Apostle Paul had a special understanding of our dispensation, as he often spoke of this in 'his Gospel.' On the mount, the complexities and the mysteries of Christ's kingdom are revealed. We have to choose. Do we prefer to be sheltered at the 'Rock' and to sing the hymn 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee', or do we prefer to contest Satan on the foothills? The three disciples who accompanied our Lord were wrapped up with a glorious vision of Christ, but down below, the other nine disciples were in turmoil, contesting Satan. The other nine disciples proved to be incompetent to even cast out the demons on earth. The disciples tried in vain, and they smelled no victory. In the meantime, the three disciples on the Mount of glorification were with our Lord to portray our dispensation. The Apostle Paul says he was snatched away into heaven, and he heard things that cannot be expressed in words, things that no human being has a right even to mention (2 Corinthians 12:4). Moses too was not allowed to express his vision in words, but he made the tabernacle to unfold its truths. The Apostle Paul was prompted to share the truth he saw on the mountain, but the carnally minded Corinthians or many Christians today are too clumsy, immature or worldly to even handle them.

• Elijah. The life of Elijah has gripped the thoughts and imagination of many people. He appeared unexpectedly to Ahab to predict the drought and caused havoc, to later depart from earth in a chariot of fire. He comes in like a thunderstorm and left the earth as a whirlwind. He stood alone against 450 prophets of Baal, an unfriendly king and against an entire nation. He prayed, and God sent fire down from heaven in a most

miraculous way. In the next chapter, 1 Kings 19, Elijah seemed somewhat despondent. We read that the false prophets were dead, the drought ended, and the people had turned back to God. At that point, we are tempted to say they all lived happily thereafter. But that is not what it says. Elijah raced to Jezreel, thinking a national revival was about to take place. He was excited about the events that happened earlier in the day, but his excitement is short-lived, as he miscalculated the wickedness of Jezebel. She frightened Elijah, and he fled from Jezreel to Beersheba, about 100 miles. Elijah did not stop there, as he continued his flight to the wilderness. There he throws himself to the ground under a bush, and he prays that he might die. Now the Lord sends a heavenly messenger with food and water to care for his physical needs. That food must have been something special, for it provided Elijah with enough nourishment to take him on a 40-day journey without eating. He continued southward all the way to Sinai, coming at last to Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai. Elijah felt discouraged. He seems to have come to the conclusion that he is indispensable in God's plan. He says, I'm the only prophet God has left, and if anything happens to me, God won't have anyone left. God told Elijah he was not the only person, as there were 7000 other people (the remnant) who hadn't bowed their knees to Baal (1 Kings 19:18).
God says to Elijah, Get to the top of the mountain, and you will see what you desire. Elijah climbs to the top of the mountain, and again Elijah is ready for his next mountaintop experience. It says Elijah came to the cave, and it may have been the same 'cleft in the rock' in which Moses had seen the glory of God. Elijah is on the same mountain, and he is standing before the presence of the same God. As the presence of God had passed by Moses, so now it will go past Elijah. What shape would it take? A blinding light? A thunderous roar? A great wind? A rumbling earthquake? A consuming fire? All of these things passed by, each heralding the coming of the Lord. But the Lord did not come in any of these. He comes instead in the sound of a gentle blowing. I prefer the King James translation – 'a still small voice.' There is a lesson here. It is that God doesn't always speak in the dynamic and with the mighty thundering voice, with dramatic and earth-shattering events. Usually, He speaks in the gentle blowing. You can spend your life looking for the dramatic, to climb a mountain to find God. No, He is here with us today, a gentle voice in a lonely desert cave, speaking to us.
• Moses. The Old Testament ends with the words: 'Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives' (Malachi 4:5). The Jewish nation had the complete Old Testament, and they were well aware of Elijah that should come, but not the Samaritan woman at the well, who was only familiar with the five Books of Moses. The Samaritans had a historical connection to the people of Israel, as their faith was centred on the five Books of Moses. They were not anticipating a king, but a 'Prophet like unto Moses' (Deuteronomy 18:15). Thus, the Jewish people were more attentive to Elijah, and the Samaritans were more aware of Moses the coming prophet.
High on Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the pattern of the tabernacle. 'When Moses was about to make the tabernacle, God warned him, "Be

sure to make everything based on the plan I showed you on the mountain”’ (Hebrews 8:5). On Mount Sinai, Moses looked straight into heaven, and he witnessed the greater truths of our dispensation. It was imprinted on his mind, and he had to make a prototype of it. He designed the tabernacle, including the feast days, the priest’s clothing and all the other finer facets of the tabernacle. The motive was to depict the glory of our dispensation of grace. It paints the simple realities of our dispensation and Christ’s atoning work for us. Moses saw the real thing, the New Testament truths. Therefore, by definition, the tabernacle is an art. Visual art is to express intangible things. Often the question is asked: how do we portray Christ in Scripture? He is pictured as a Lamb, and we can also understand Him via a study of the tabernacle. It expresses many spiritual truths touching the Lord Jesus Christ and His resurrection. One can only understand the tabernacle once we are acquainted with the New Testament. Christ is the essence of the tabernacle, and He proved it when the inner veil rent with His death and resurrection. The New Testament truths were fixed but hidden via the means of typology in the Old Testament. I believe Elijah and the Apostle Paul had the same vision of our dispensation.

The miracles in the Bible were mostly performed by those who went to Mount Sinai and their followers. We are acquainted with Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, the Lord Jesus and His disciples, including the Apostle Paul.

A classical miracle happened with Elisha. ‘One day some men were burying a man when they spotted a raiding party. So they threw the dead man into Elisha’s tomb. When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the dead man came to life and stood on his feet’ (2 Kings 13:21). Elisha’s dead body was a means of giving life to another dead body. This miracle was a confirmation of his prophecies, and it points to Christ Jesus, by whose death and burial we are made alive again.

What did our Lord reveal on the mount?

‘They appeared in glory and spoke about His departure (exodus), which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem’ (Luke 9:31).

The foremost question to ask is: why were Elijah and Moses chosen as the Lord's companions on that solemn night on the Mount of Transfiguration? Probably the reason is that Moses was the human author of the divine law, and Elijah was known as the great prophet. I believe they were the only two men who kept their earthly bodies. Elijah, we know, was swept alive into the other—or the grander—world; and as for Moses, God hid his body from human sight, and the mysterious words of Jude 9 would seem to tell us more. Michael the Archangel contested with Satan about the body of Moses. They were the exception to be finally part of the Church. Their purpose was to strengthen the sinless Sufferer. It was not only in Gethsemane that his ‘soul was sorrowful even unto death,’ but the sorrows must have pierced Him at the Mount of Transfiguration. At the Garden of Gethsemane, there ‘appeared to him an angel from heaven to strengthen Him,’ so to duplicate the experience at the Mount. Another valid reason was to help the three disciples. Their uncommitted faith would be strengthened.

‘They spoke of His departure, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.’ The Greek word for ‘departure’ is translated as ‘Exodus’—the same name as the second book of Moses. Exodus is about the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt. In Hebrews 11:22, we find the similar Greek word when Joseph, at the end of his life, mentioned the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Death is a departure out of this world, and it goes by the name ‘exodus’. In 2 Peter 1:15, the Apostle Peter talks about his death. These are the only three occurrences of the Greek word ‘exodus’ (Str. 1841) in the New Testament. It testifies to Christ's death, or exit (exodus), which He was to commence at Jerusalem; and Moses and Elijah were there to encourage Him, as humans. The sufferings and death of Christ were what Moses and the prophets had foretold (Luke 24:27). I believe the ascension of Christ to heaven is contained in the word ‘Exodus’, which was His final departure out of this world, to forget His sufferings and death. The Israelites' departure out of Egypt was victorious, and similarly Christ's exodus via His death and resurrection would see Him finally glorified in heaven. The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was a live illustration, and similarly the Church will echo His great deliverance. The deliverance commenced at Jerusalem and spread to the four corners of the earth. The book of Acts is an example, as it opens with the Apostle Peter’s sermon at Jerusalem, and it ends with the words of the Apostle Paul at Rome: ‘Be it known therefore unto you, (Jews,) that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.’ (Acts 28:28) The Apostle John was also present on the Mount, and he shared his experiences. He opened his Gospel with the glorious vision of a glorified Lord on that day, and we can gather it left a great impression on his life. ‘And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.’ (John 1:14) The opening 13 verses of John 1 explain how God involved Himself with our old creation, and He spoke several times. John the Baptist was part of the Old Testament times, and he died before our Lord was resurrected. The Apostle John did not even mention the birth of Jesus, and some commentators made a sceptical remark, saying: goodness, he doesn't even appear to know the name of Jesus' mother! The reason is that John 1 is not meant to be read at Christmas but rather at Easter. John was careful to define the Word of God, saying whenever God spoke, things materialised. A classic example is when God created our world. God’s Word is powerful, and He merely spoke to create things. He is the light, but strangely our dark world seems to stifle it. John the Baptist spoke of the light, and he too experienced the hostile world; but the people who did trust in God during the Old Testament times had the assurance that they too would be known as the children of God. John the Baptist was a prophet, equalling the fate of the prophets in the Old Testament times. They lived in anticipation of being called the children of God. Since Christ's resurrection, we are indeed called the children of God. We are already part of the new creation, and we don’t need to wait like Father Abraham, who will be reborn on the ‘last day,’ when the Old Testament believers will be raised from the dead. To be called a ‘son of God’ is a different issue. With the rapture of the Church, we will be rewarded, and

our ultimate goal is to be called the sons of God, if we are worthy of our calling.
After the long prologue (like in Hebrews 1), the Apostle John portrays his first glimpse of Jesus. His glimpse of Him was not at His birth or with His crucifixion—no, it was Jesus who was glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration. John says we have seen His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father. Whenever in the past God did speak, things were created, like the flesh of plants, humans, and animals. What could the meaning be of the words: ‘and the Word became flesh?’
Simply, it can be translated as: ‘the Word of God is fulfilled in His only begotten. ’
The words that were spoken earlier by the Old Testament prophets did materialise, and they are fulfilled in the glorified Christ; thus He became flesh. It was not fulfilled with Jesus' birth at Bethlehem—no, everything is fulfilled in the resurrected Christ. The Word became flesh, and thus it is now tangible to each person who believes in His Word. It is fulfilled in us, and the proof is the new creation inside of us. It is not fulfilled in the unbelieving world, who prefers the darkness. The flesh is everything we can see and touch with our hands, and it is brought about by the Word of God. The old creation will vanish, and its fate is in the hands of the new creation, as the old will be swallowed by the new. Nothing of the old will exist, and the many laws will be exchanged by Christ, who is full of grace and truth. ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls.’ (1 Peter 1:24) The old will wither like a flower, but if we are part of Christ, then we too are part of the new flesh: the first begotten and the first to taste the new creation. Christ is the Word of God, and if He [was] brought about by the Word of God, then He is Flesh. The Hebrew word for flesh is basar (Str. no. 1320). It is first found in Genesis 2:21, 23, and it is generally translated as ‘flesh’, as Eve was part of Adam’s flesh.
The same Word of God will create the ‘flesh of the new creation’, but this time it resembles a life-giving fountain. The Old Testament saints had to wait patiently for 4,000 years until they could see someone who is truly God. In the Hebrew language, the verb for the word ‘flesh’ is basar (Str. no. 1319), and it is found 24 times in the Old Testament, where it is translated as ‘messenger’ or ‘tidings’. Indeed, the true messenger (basar) is the resurrected Christ, who will spread the good ‘tidings’ to all humankind. Thus, the ‘flesh’ can be translated as the ‘good tidings.’ In the Old Testament, we do have examples: ‘And the messenger (basar, Str. no. 1319) answered and said, Israel fled before the Philistines, and there has been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God was taken.’ (1 Samuel 4:17) The Apostle Peter (2 Peter 1:16, 17) also experienced the events on the Mount of Transfiguration, and he said: ‘we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ”’

The Apostle John says our Lord was the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. In the Gospels, the ‘only begotten Son’ is referred to twice in this chapter and twice in John 3. Jesus talked to Nicodemus about being ‘born again from above,’ and he uses the words ‘the only begotten Son’ and ‘the name of the only begotten Son of God.’ ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in Him (the Son) is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.’ (John 3:16, 18)

This passage addresses our spiritual birth, and Jesus had to be lifted up—or He had to be raised from the dead, to be seated in heaven—before He would be able to impart eternal life. He told Nicodemus: ‘You must be born from above.’ He meant a spiritual birth that would be ‘wrought by God,’ the Father, after Jesus had been raised from the dead, to ascend into glory. That is to be born of the Spirit.

Therefore, the words ‘only begotten Son’ do not refer to the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. The saying ‘the only begotten Son of God’ is tied directly to Christ's resurrection from the dead. The reason for this is simple: the Scripture teaches us that Mary gave birth to Jesus as a child in the flesh, but Christ was begotten of God the Father, given a life-giving Spirit, with His resurrection from the dead. The exact time is given, saying: ‘Today.’ It happened when God raised Him up from amongst the dead, as prophesied in the Psalms: ‘Today, I have begotten you.’ This is a fulfilment of what was prophetically spoken by David: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten you.’ (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33) It was a spiritual birth, and thus He is called the firstborn from the dead. In fact, there is no other mention in Scripture saying that God caused Jesus to be ‘begotten’ at any other time, other than with His resurrection. Christ Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. (Romans 1:4) We are born anew and are blessed with an indestructible body—and even ISIS will never destroy the body we are born into with our rebirth. Something happened to us the moment when Christ resurrected from the dead. We inherited an indestructible body. In Hebrews 5:5, it says with Christ's resurrection from the dead, He is appointed as our High Priest. His priesthood resembles that of Melchizedek, whose ancestry was untraceable and permanent. Melchizedek proved to be the risen Lord, who intercedes for us daily. ‘For to which of the angels did He ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? And again, “I will be a Father to him and he shall be a son to me”?’ (Hebrews 1:5) The words ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’ cannot refer to Jesus’ birth because He had to ‘learn obedience’ from the ‘things he suffered.’ (Hebrews 5:8) On the Mount of Transfiguration, the Apostle John had a glimpse of the anticipated glory of the risen Christ. Then He was not humiliated, but seen as the glorified.

Mark 9:9–13

‘And as they came down from the mountain, he commanded them that they should tell no one what things they had seen until the Son of man was risen from the dead. And they kept the word within themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should be. And they asked him, saying, Why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come? And he answered and told them, Elijah verily shall come first and restore all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things and be esteemed as nothing. But I say unto you, That Elijah has indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they wished, as it is written of him. ’
What else troubled the disciples? They noticed Elijah on the Mount, and they had a reasonable question to ask. Didn’t Elijah have to come first? Indeed, Elijah will come before the Day of the Lord, and the great tribulation will commence with Israel (Malachi 4:5). It is clear that our Lord needs to be glorified in heaven until the time when everything will be restored as God promised through His holy prophets (Acts 3:21). What will be restored? It is the throne of David. Our Lord assured them that Elijah has already come, and they chose to abuse him, just as the Scriptures predicted; and the Lord Jesus will have a similar fate. They both will follow the same path of humiliation. It can have a twofold meaning, as Christ wanted to picture His own death. Elijah is a type of Christ, and he will reappear during Daniel's 70th week (Revelation 11), and we discussed the subject previously. Matthew 17:11–12 addresses the same instance, and he verifies that our Lord will follow the same path as John the Baptist, or Elijah. He said Elijah has already come, and he wasn’t accepted, and they beheaded him. In the same way, the Son of Man will suffer. Herod epitomises the Jewish nation, and he beheaded John the Baptist; and the Apostle James died with the sword, likely a beheading. James accompanied our Lord to the mount, and he was the only apostle whose death is recorded in the Bible (Acts 12:2). He was the third apostle who saw our Lord, but sadly he wrote nothing of his experiences.

Mark 9:14–29
‘And as he came to the disciples, he saw a great multitude about them and scribes that disputed with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. And he asked the scribes, What dispute ye with them? And one of the multitude answering, said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, who has a dumb spirit; and wherever he takes him, he tears him, and he foams and gnashes with his teeth and pines away; and I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not. Answering, he said unto him, O unfaithful generation, how long shall I be with you? How long must I suffer you? Bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him; and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tore him; and he fell on the ground and wallowed foaming. And Jesus asked his father, How long ago is it since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oft-times it has cast him into the fire and into the waters to kill him; but if thou canst do anything, help us, having mercy on us. And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe this, all things are possible to him that believes. And

straightway the father of the child crying out with tears, said, Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. When Jesus saw that the multitude concurred, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. Then the spirit, crying out and rending him sore, came out; and he remained as one dead, insomuch that many said that he was dead. But Jesus, taking him by the hand, straightened him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said to them, This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer. ’

Our Lord was transfigured during the night, and early the next morning He descended the mountain with His three disciples. A big company joined them, and amongst the crowd were the scribes. Luke 9 details this history more thoroughly, saying a man from the crowd called out to Jesus: ‘Teacher, I beg of you to look at my son, my only child.’ Luke is the only disciple who mentioned that the pleading man had only one son, tormented by an evil spirit. The word ‘child’ (Str. No. G3439) here could be translated as ‘the only begotten son,’ as in John 1:18. It was no ordinary child. The son had epilepsy, and the disciples were powerless to heal him, but our Lord did: He returned his son to his father, free from any possession, in perfect health. It must have pleased the father and the crowds immensely. This brings us to another story of the well-known prodigal son. He too was the youngest son, coming to his father to ask for his inheritance ahead of time. He took the inheritance and spent it all, having a good time. Soon he had no money to spend, and he was reduced to working in a pig’s pen. For a Jew, to tend to pigs was the height of humiliation. He thought of his father’s servants, and he decided to return home. He was accepted with open arms by his father. The older son was outraged and angry that his father had allowed his brother to return, and even more disturbing, he was robbed of the firstborn right. The prodigal son ended up having the ring, a pair of sandals, and a huge feast in his honour, with the choicest of the fatted calves (Luke 15:11–32). The son was lost, and now he is found; and similarly with the son who had epilepsy, who returned to his father in perfect health. There is a similar dispute between the two and the ten lost tribes of Israel. Today, the Jewish nation claims the title of Israel, thinking they are the real firstborn, but no—unbeknown to them, they will discover they lost everything. It is entrusted to the ten lost tribes of Israel, or Ephraim, and he will surface. At the time of our Lord’s return, there will be a great dispute between the tribes of Israel, but the Jewish nation will discover who the real firstborn are. The ten lost tribes of Israel were miraculously healed: lost, but now they are found. The rights of the firstborn could never be lost, as any king is deemed the real firstborn. The ‘only begotten son’ is the real firstborn, and he had epilepsy, but now he is cured. The ring that was entrusted to the prodigal son has the signature of the firstborn. A great puzzle in the book of Genesis is: who is the real firstborn? The book ended with Ephraim as the firstborn, and since then it went to Israel. Israel dabbled with the demons, and a classical example is Ahab and Jezebel. Since the time when the ten lost tribes of Israel (Jeroboam) segregated themselves from the

two tribes of Israel (Rehoboam), they never followed the law. Their fate was like the young child who developed epilepsy from a tender age. Today, the ten lost tribes of Israel are inclined to the Gospel, but they are totally unaware of who they really are; but the Jewish nation refuses Christ, though they know who they are. The ten lost tribes of Israel are the LOST SHEEP our Lord did find on earth. They were taken captive and exiled to Assyria, known as the lost ten tribes. They are also known as ‘Ephraim’ or ‘the house of Joseph.’ To the world, they have been lost for 2,700 years in both a physical and spiritual sense. Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, prophesied that Ephraim would become a multitude of nations. When Jacob attempted to bless them, Joseph brought his firstborn, Manasseh, to Jacob’s right hand, and Ephraim to his left; Jacob switched his hands and knowingly blessed Ephraim, confirming he would become a multitude of nations (Genesis 48:17–19). They will be like the sand of the sea (Genesis 32:12; 41:49; Isaiah 10:20; Hosea 1:10; Romans 9:27). There are hundreds of millions of the descendants of the House of Israel all over the world. The irony is they do not even know that they are sons and daughters of Jacob or Israel. Jesus said: ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ (Matthew 15:24) He came to find the lost sheep of Israel and to redeem them. That is why Jesus came.

The truth is that Jesus was sent to find the people that were already His and redeem them. He promised this via the covenant and the promises He repeatedly declared by the prophets. He came for His people who were ‘lost’ in all possible ways: physically and spiritually. And that is the purpose of the Gospel. Moses warned Israel repeatedly: if they disobeyed God, He would scatter them (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:27; 28:64). Thus, Jesus' top priority is to find, redeem, and bring the lost sheep back to Himself. The enemy (the wolves in sheep’s clothing) did not want God’s people to know who they really are, and God used this deception to test His people—and He still is. For this reason, many Christians, especially those who consider themselves Gentiles, do not understand the role of ‘Ephraim’ in God’s salvation plan, and they struggle to understand the many verses like Jeremiah 31:31:‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ’

There are several accounts in the Gospels we can use, but a compelling one is the Samaritan woman (John 4:3–45). In the Gospel of John, Samaria was the first place He went to reveal His real Messianic identity, while He was hesitant to openly announce it in Judea. This entire story can be regarded as a prophecy, telling us what His plan would be like for the following 2,000 years. After He revealed His glory at a wedding in Cana by turning six vessels of water into good wine (His first recorded miracle), Jesus went to Judea, where He met Nicodemus, saying he had to be born anew to see the Kingdom of God. After that, He left there to go to Galilee. It says: ‘He needed to pass through Samaria’ (John 4:4), and He had solid reasons. He had to visit the ‘lost sheep. ’

He does not give us any reason why He ‘needed’ to go through Samaria, but I believe there is a far greater typological reason. So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his

son Joseph (4:5). Sychar means ‘drunk’ or ‘strong drink’, and it expresses the sinful nature of the Samaritans or the ten lost tribes of Israel. The nation seemed like the possessed son having demons, which made him ‘foam’ in his mouth. The woman was at ‘Jacob’s well’ to identify the lost sheep who are the descendants of Jacob—the Israelites devoid of their firstborn right. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, and they looked down on them. Our Lord didn’t ignore her, but He revealed His true identity as the Messiah, offering the ‘living water’—the true Messiah promised in the Old Testament. He told her: ‘Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.’ He said: ‘I who speak to you am He’ (4:26), and the core of this sentence is ‘I AM’—the name of God.

Why did Jesus ‘need’ to go to Samaria, from all places, to reveal that He was the Messiah to an outcast Samaritan? Prophetically, the Samaritan woman represents the lost sheep of Israel, and similarly the son with the epilepsy.

Hearing the Good News, the Samaritan woman believed in Him and rejoiced, having no hesitancy to spread the good news—to evangelise to her own people. The first Gentile evangelist was a woman! And immediately after this, Jesus speaks of the great ‘harvest’ and ‘the labourers’ (4:35–38), prophesying a bountiful harvest of the souls that will soon come about: the souls of the descendants of the lost ten tribes, whom the Samaritan woman represents. Our Lord remained there for two days—or 2,000 years—the time of the Church. There are many similarities between the Samaritan woman and the Church:

- She receives the Messiah with no hesitancy;
- She calls Him ‘the Saviour of the world,’ not as the Messiah to the Israelites;
- The Jews would ask for a sign (1 Corinthians 1:22), but the Samaritans did not;
- The number of believers increased quickly by her word of mouth.

It was different in Judah, as Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honour in his own country (4:44). The urgency of the Messiah was to go to Samaria—he was compelled to go to the Gentiles to find the lost sheep and to share His true identity with them.

The complete book of Genesis evolves around the firstborn issue that was finally entrusted to Ephraim. In the following book, Exodus, there seems to be an anti-climax, as the firstborn issue is not raised, and the appointed king to rule Israel was from the tribe of Judah, and priestly duty is entrusted to the tribe of Levi. Not a word about Joseph or Ephraim. Did God forget them? No! Judah and Levi may have an important slice of the old covenant or the law, and my general opinion is the Law of Moses did not interest the ten lost tribes of Israel or Ephraim. Once Christ fulfilled the requirements of the law with His death and resurrection, then the question of Ephraim hits the limelight. The new covenant is different, and the firstborn right of Ephraim does encompass both the duties of a king and a priest. Indeed, the importance of Ephraim is savoured in the Church

today, who are the real firstborn; and we as members of the Church are called both kings and priests (Revelation 1:6). The blessings of Ephraim are savoured in the Church today, and mainstream Christianity is totally unaware of our great blessing. When the firstborn rights of Jacob were entrusted to Ephraim, Joseph witnessed everything; and similarly, when Jesus of Nazareth was born, Joseph the husband of Mary witnessed the birth of Jesus—as from Jesus the real Firstborn, or the resurrected Christ, who will be born anew. A total new creation will develop, and the old will fall by the wayside. After the rapture of the Church, when the Church is complete, the firstborn right of Ephraim will cease to exist, as the developing new believers during the great tribulation will not be part of the Church. In the latter chapters of the book of Ezekiel (44:15), the temple is mentioned, and then the Levite tribe will do service in the temple. I wish to return to Mark 9. The evil spirits are dumb and powerful, and they even dared to resist and defy Christ; and when he departed from the boy, he meant to kill him. He sought to destroy his life, to hurt what he cannot retain. He is like an outgoing tenant, wrecking the house he used to live in. Demons can’t speak audibly. This is no surprise, as you need a physical body to speak. They can, however, speak through human beings and frequently do. You don’t have to be possessed to have a demon speak through you. Poor Peter discovered this when Jesus turned and said to him: ‘Get behind me, Satan.’ (Matthew 16:23) Jesus was looking at Peter, but He was speaking to Satan, who had just spoken through Peter’s mouth. The demons can speak, but gibberish—like the speaking in tongues. They can enter a human body, but not at will. We need to invite them. Judas at the Last Supper (John 13:27) is a classic example of a demon that possessed him. Clearly, he was open for the devil to enter him; his heart was full of evil intent. Judas used to steal from the money box and protested when valuable items were, in his opinion, wasted. He objected to Mary anointing the feet of Jesus with expensive perfume made of pure nard oil.

The young son had to speak sensibly but couldn’t, as foam was coming from his mouth. The Apostle Peter says we (the Church) are the stone that makes the people stumble, the rock that makes them fall, if they reject the Word of God. He is precious to those who believe in Him, but a cause of stumbling to those who reject Him. They stumble because they do not obey God's Word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them. We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, to declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:8–9). We need to speak the Word of God, and in this chapter the Apostle Peter did not address the unbelievers but the believers, quoting Isaiah 8:13–15. He is the one we should fear. He is the one who should make us tremble. To both the houses of Israel, He will either be a sanctuary or a stone that makes a person trip. He will become a trap and a snare to the residents of Jerusalem. Many will stumble and fall, never to rise again. They will be snared and captured. The people who trust Him will be reckoned with Ephraim, and if they reject Him, then He will be a stone of stumbling. Obviously, this chapter refers to the formation of the Church, as Isaiah 8:18 is cited in Hebrews 2:13:

‘Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me shall be for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwelleth in mount Zion. ’
The son having the epilepsy does picture the sad state of Israel, who were ensnared by the many demons. He could not speak, and he wasted his saliva by foaming from the mouth. The son envisaged the Celtic religion that was favoured by the ten lost tribes of Israel, but luckily they abandoned the rituals since Christ's resurrection from the dead. The Celtic culture was nothing short of barbaric, and luckily the traditional Celtic religious practices did become extinct, to be replaced by Christianity. Their accepting Christ is like the boy who was healed, who abandoned the Celtic practices—the religion that made him speak nonsense. The same mouth that used to make him foam can be used to praise the living God in heaven. Since he was healed, he could speak sensibly and was eligible to sing praises unto God. Today, Christianity is blamed for the extinction of the Celtic practices, and their practices in the past were never allowed to be written down on paper. Verbally, the practices and offerings of the Celtic cult were exchanged from generation to generation. Whatever we do know of the Celtic practices is written either by the Romans or the early Christians who used to be druids. The Celtic druids were forbidden to write any of their practices on tablets or paper. The boy became a true ‘son’ the father could be proud of, and he epitomises the firstborn right that is now invested in Ephraim. We need to accept the Word of God, and once it settles in our heart, then we can speak it. The boy was dumb, and he could not speak, as in Hosea 4:6: ‘My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. ’
The disciples were not skilled to rid the demon from the boy. His father said he developed epilepsy since he was young, and often he wanted to kill himself, either by drowning or throwing himself in the fire. He was in a destructive mode. The faith of the son did not matter, but the faith of the father and mother counted most. Our Lord conquered the evil spirits, and traditionally in the West, the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel is honoured each year—and this year it is on 29 September. Michael (whose name means ‘one who is like God’) is known as a divine messenger, a protector of the faithful, the angel who guides our souls. He is none other than the resurrected Christ. He is often depicted with a sword in His hand, subduing a dragon, or with a snake beneath his feet. Michael represents divine strength and courage in the face of evil. Michael is the patron saint of paratroopers, police, soldiers, and many more people. Michael has held a special place of honour and reverence, and He did rid the West of the demonic Celtic traditions. The Christians are blamed today—the people who defeated the old Celtic practices. Our Lord rebuked the evil spirit to never return again, unlike today when they are known to return to vex the spiritualists, psychics, and the so-called mediums. That is common amongst some churches. Many thought the child died and was helpless, but he was reborn, standing on his feet. When our Lord took him by the hand, he did not make him fall to the ground as some healers do—no, his

mind was totally sound. The disciples asked why they were incompetent to cast the demon from the boy. Our Lord replied: this kind cannot come out except by prayer. To pray is to allow Christ to be totally part of us and to commune with Him. His thoughts will become our thoughts. ‘Fasting’ is not found in the old Hebrew text. While our Lord was on the Mount of Transfiguration, the other nine disciples were occupied trying to defeat Satan. They proved incompetent and did not restrict the working of Satan on earth, and their work proved to be time-wasting. They needed to be with the Lord on the Mount, and then they would defeat Satan and all the evil principalities in heaven. We need to decide where we want to be: to improve ourselves on the slopes of the mountain, or to be with our Lord on the Mount. We are confronted with the evil forces, and we will not stand if we trust our own skills. Israel (all twelve tribes) will accept Christ with His first coming, and similarly they will also accept Him with His second coming to earth. Every prophecy in the Bible has a double fulfilment—one with Christ's first return and the other with His second return to earth. We will not triumph over Satan until our Lord returns from the Mount of Transfiguration to confront Satan. On the ‘Day of the Lord’, when Christ returns to earth, then we will return with Christ in the clouds, as the three disciples who descended the mountain with the Lord. Once Israel accepts Christ as their Saviour, then Israel will be immune against the onslaught of Satan; and for the following 33 years (between the ‘Day of the Lord’ and Armageddon), Israel will be at Jerusalem and Satan at Babylon. It will be Goliath opposing David. As the firstborn, Ephraim will have a double share. His first share is to be part of the Church today—to be part of heaven—and the second share will be entrusted to him once they accept our Lord after the rapture of the Church. Thus, he has a heavenly and an earthly share. Mark 9:30‘And having left there, they walked together through Galilee; and he did not wish that anyone should know of it. ’

We reached the second half of the Gospel of Mark, and soon He will journey towards Jerusalem, the place of His death and resurrection. In this chapter they visited the northern shores of Galilee, and only in chapter 11 did they go to Jericho, to finally end their journey at Jerusalem. Since this Gospel is comparatively short, the tension of this journey is more evident than in the other Gospels, as Jesus draws His reluctant and confused disciples to face the truths concerning the mystery of His cross. For the second time Jesus announces His imminent death. He will be handed over and He will die. After three days He will rise again. The first time our Lord spoke of His death, Peter reacted strongly, but in this chapter he is stunned.
The following verses underline that the disciples are not yet ready to face up to what Jesus said.
The mystery baffled the disciples and I don’t know how to commence the great subject of God’s mystery. The Apostle Paul mentions it frequently

and He opens the Corinthians Letter about this mystery. He said: ‘And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the mystery of God.’ 1 Cor. 2:1. Some translators render the word ‘mystery’ as ‘testimony’ and there seems to be some confusion. The Alexandrian and the Syriac versions translate it as ‘the mystery of God’ and the Vulgate Latin version ‘the testimony of Christ’. I believe the Apostle Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand the mysteries of God, maintaining that during Old Testament times they were hidden. Indeed, Christ’s death and resurrection is sketched in the Old Testament but in a hidden manner. The Apostle Paul continues to say we speak the wisdom of God, which was previously clouded in a mystery, the things God planned before the ages (Adam) for our glory. None of the rulers like Satan, Herod or Pilate understood it. If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 1 Cor. 2:7, 8. The Apostle Paul reiterates that he is speaking of the hidden wisdom or the mystery (not testimony) of God as in verse 1. Throughout Old Testament times, Satan was not aware of God’s secret plan and he was fooled, thinking he had conquered Jesus with His death, but he had no knowledge that Christ would resurrect from the dead. Nothing made sense to him until it was too late for him, losing the battle.

It is natural for us to debate this mystery. Since there are so many prophecies about our Lord in the Old Testament, should not Satan have gathered that Jesus was going to die on the cross to cleanse us of all our sins? Satan is not omnipotent and he had no idea what God was planning to do, but if he had understood the prophecies, he may have prevented the crucifixion of Jesus, to die a natural death. He is called Satan for a reason, as his pride blinded him, thinking he could challenge the living God. That kind of pride is debilitating. He thought by killing the living God, he could vacate His throne.

The mystery entails all the detail of our Lord’s death and resurrection and the formation of the Church, until the world enters the Millennium. The reason why our Lord spoke in parables is to confuse the listeners who refused Him. In Luke 8:10, Jesus tells His disciples that He speaks the hidden mysteries of God’s Kingdom in parables to enable them (and the believing crowd) to understand their hidden meaning; to prevent the unbelieving world from absorbing what the Spirit is saying. ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’ Luke 8:10. If the mysteries are made known to us, then we can unfold all the previously hidden things that were previously hidden, whether they are the mysteries as traced in the Old Testament or in the parables Jesus spoke. We need to search for them, and they are never given to us on a plate.

An example is all the truths regarding the tabernacle. In the inner sanctuary there used to be a covering over the Ark, hiding the real contour of the Ark. They could picture the Ark in their minds, knowing the Ark was there, but they were unfamiliar with the ‘greater truths’ to be explored. They had to wait until our Lord resurrected from the dead to really understand the mystery. Similarly, the disciples heard of this great

mystery, but they would understand once Christ did resurrect from the dead.
‘And He has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ.’ Eph. 1:9. Previously the people were not acquainted with God’s plan, but now it is made plain to us. The Patriarchs like Abraham were promised the truths that are made known to us today. The prophets foretold the truths we know today. The mystery entails all the events between Christ’s resurrection and His return to earth.
The Apostle Paul says God’s plan was previously hidden, and the climax of God’s great mystery is our position in Christ. 1 Cor. 2:7. Two verses later the Apostle Paul quotes Isaiah 64:4 saying: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.’ 2:9. This verse is easily misunderstood, and little is written about the verse. Isaiah says the Old Testament prophets never dreamed of our great position in Christ, thinking it was not possible. It is to our glory, to those who love him. We will never find the truths of this great mystery condensed or easily understood in the Bible, but it is scattered, running like a thin thread throughout the Bible. It is not written in easy-to-understand sentences. No, they are difficult to discern and the reason is to fool Satan, but God promised to us that He will reveal them to us via His Spirit. 2:10. The unbelieving theologians will never understand God’s plan or notice the thin thread running throughout the Bible. They will quote many verses, but they cannot compile them to make any sense of them. Studying either Hebrew or Greek will not favour them.
The writer of a book defines the fine line, whether the verse is to be read and studied having a literal fulfilment or a symbolic meaning. The battle between David and Goliath has both. The great surprise is that a people is chosen from amongst the Gentile nations to be promoted from a fallen earth to be totally part of heaven, and even more to be one flesh with Christ. It is no marriage; no, we are called to be His sons. The world or natural man deems it total foolishness as they don’t have the Spirit of God inside of them. They are not taught the greater truths. Few Christians are really interested in Christ’s present work for us today. They are aware of His past redemptive work at Calvary and His future coming to earth, but they have no clue what He is doing for us today. He is doing more for us today than He did for His disciples before His crucifixion.
If Jesus’ death defeated Satan, 1 Jn. 3:8; Col. 2:14–15, and Satan knew the ploy, then he wouldn’t have killed Jesus. Satan was stripped of all the power he had with Christ’s resurrection from the dead. The old creation and covenant (law) is nailed to the cross and behold, everything became new. The old creation vanished and died, and Satan is left penniless. The new creation in Christ will bring an end to Satan’s old creation. It will be swallowed up in victory. The prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament are abundant and Satan was aware of some prophecies. In fact, he cited some Scripture from memory when Jesus was tempted. Mt. 4. Satan expected Jesus to come as a conquering King, Jn. 6:15, and not as the suffering Servant. No one before Jesus believed that the Messiah was going to come to die before He would set up His Kingdom on earth.

Judaism before Christ never interpreted Isaiah 53 as referring to the sufferings of the Messiah; no, they deemed the suffering servant to be the Jewish nation. The crowds and the disciples did not understand the purpose of His mission on earth. It wasn't until after Christ rose from the dead that Jesus 'opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.' Lk. 24:45–47. That is why Paul says that natural man cannot accept the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; they cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised. 1 Cor. 2:14. Undoubtedly there are brilliant people today, but God reveals His truth to the humble of heart. Satan never expected God to go to such great depths of humiliation to redeem the complete world of sin. Satan is a self-seeker, aiming to glorify himself, unlike God. By dying on the cross, Paul writes that the resurrected Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities; He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them. Col. 2:14–15. Via the cross, Jesus rescued us from the domain of darkness, transferring us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. Col. 1:13. He freed us from the fear of death, which is one of Satan's essential tools to frighten us. Heb. 2:14–15. Thus I challenge any person to quote any Old Testament verse that clearly says that our Lord will die on the cross. Certainly every aspect of our Lord's birth, life, death and resurrection was prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures, but in a hidden manner. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 certainly stand out. Psalm 22 is especially amazing since it predicted numerous separate elements about Jesus' crucifixion, even when it was written a thousand years before His crucifixion. Yes, nothing 'black on white' is spelt out to us. We can discern the mystery and to us the complete Old Testament comes to life again. Psalm 22 says 'My God, my God, why did you forsake me?' and the unbelieving people think it is King David speaking and not our Lord on the cross. The words are written by David, but they are the words of our Lord. The complete Psalm does speak of Christ and the suffering Psalms do endorse that they express the thoughts of the humiliated Lord – but nothing 'black on white'. Psalm 22 never mentions the word death but merely says He nearly died of thirst. 22:15. In verse 20 the Psalmist asks to be delivered from the sword and the power of the dog which is the person who is trying to kill him. Merely by mentioning the dogs proves that the passage about the pierced hands and feet is symbolic.
Another contested Psalm is Psalm 8, as the subject of the Psalm is Christ and not natural man.
When we study Psalm 8 we constantly make a fuss of ourselves thinking we are the exalted man.
'You have made him a little lower than yourself. You have crowned him with glory and honour.' 8:5. No, the subject is the humiliated Jesus and the risen Christ, and the Apostle Paul verifies this. Heb. 2:6. The first Adam is purely dust. The apostle Peter says all the Psalms bear evidence of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. Acts 1:16; 2:25. In Psalm 8:5 it says when our Lord became man He was made a little lower than the angels, but some translations try to twist it saying man is made a little lower than God.
'You have made him a little lower than yourself. You have crowned him with glory and honour.' God's Word translation. They believe they are

made in the image of God, and therefore we are like God. The truth is we are made from the dust of a fallen earth and our heritage is deplorable. It's confirmed in 1 Corinthians 15:47 when it says that Adam is made from the dust of the earth. Because we are made from the earth, our only hope is to finally return to dust. Gen. 3:19. Even though we are formed from the earth, we will succumb to our fate. We do not rule the earth but the earth rules us. When we study Psalm 8 our first logical question should be – what does it teach us about Christ and not ourselves? It is erroneous to deem ourselves as God. God's salvation plan is to make us like God via the resurrected and glorified Christ. Simply said, Christ is the principal subject of all the Psalms. Mainstream Christianity refutes this and especially the theologians. They maintain since the fall of Adam, we have accomplished some remarkable achievements in gaining dominion over creation. Think of all the wonders of modern science, including the advances in medical science. That is sheer pride; the world will drag us down to the dust and we need a helping hand from above. The Spirit will assist us, and the great subject of every page in the Bible is the risen Christ and not us. Once we understand this, it will be easy to follow this fine 'thread' in the Bible.

The crucifixion of our Lord is part of the mystery and it is a ploy or a strategy. Every war has a strategy, and if you don't have one, you cannot battle. The first possible mention of Jesus' death is the slaying of Abel, who pictured Jesus who died on the cross. In this history Cain mirrors the unbelieving Jewish nations, who are always 'on the run'. Seth is the risen Christ who followed Abel. For a reason Cain and Abel are frequently mentioned in the New Testament. Eve who was taken from Adam's rib pictures the Church who is totally part of Christ. We (Eve) are wholly part of Christ (Adam's) body.

There are so many more subjects pertaining to the mystery, and they are always hidden, and skilfully the Apostle Paul mastered them. The complete Book of Hebrews hinges on the typological understanding of the tabernacle.

Jesus travelled through Galilee and nearly all the Bible translators say Jesus wanted to be cloaked in secrecy. They thought our Lord desired total privacy to instruct His disciples regarding His sufferings and death. Obviously the disciples were disturbed and He had to calm them. Jesus didn't long for a holiday or to be freed from people in Galilee. No, that is very superficial. No, there is a reason and we need to know that every verse in the Bible is sandwiched, with something written before and after it. They reached the second half of the Gospel of Mark and why did Jesus want to hide His whereabouts? He did not want to hide in the mountains to escape the crowds. No, the context of the passage needs to be understood. 'Not knowing' is to reflect our minds on the great mystery He is talking about. Mark tells us, 'they did not understand …' Of course they didn't understand the mystery. There is a sense in which the cross of Jesus will always remain a mystery. Even today the Christians may ask: 'Why did Jesus have to die?' The apostle Paul wrote to his friends in Corinth, 'The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing … the Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified:

a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.’ 1 Cor. 1:18, 22, 23. We as reborn Christians can reflect on the shameful events of Christ’s crucifixion, knowing about the certainty of His resurrection, but not the disciples, who were frightful, thinking of losing Him. That is why the disciples were too afraid to even ask Him any questions, not wanting to stir the pot.

When our Lord did speak about the mystery, He chose Galilee where He frequented the most. His real company was the ‘other’ house of Israel or the lost sheep who did repent. Some disagree thinking the Lord always wishes to detail His whereabouts on all His travels and healings. There are at least 100 events (acts, healings, travels and miracles) of Jesus in His last 1,000 days, and it’s impossible to arrange them in perfect order. It proves impossible. The secrecy is the great mystery of His death and resurrection, and somehow the ten lost tribes of Israel are tied to the name Galilee. Normally our Lord was in Galilee or outside Israel, heading on the odd occasion to Judah via Samaria and not much more. Whenever Galilee is mentioned there is a typological reason. Galilee is the area of the Celtic people. Jesus and His family planned to live in Judah, but they were told by an angel to live in Galilee. Isaiah 9:1 speaks of Galilee. ‘In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan – the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

’Gladly the ten lost tribes of Israel received the message of Jesus. Zebulun and Naphtali were two of the twelve tribes of Israel. According to the Law of Moses they were given territory in the Galilee area. Here it is referred to as the ‘Galilee of the Gentiles’, but actually the area during Jesus' time was a mixture of them and some other Greeks who lived there. The letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians used to be to the great Celtic tribe, and they migrated to invade NW Europe. That is the reason why Galilee is mentioned so often in the Gospels. It is the décor of the message. In itself the décor imparts a message or colours it.

The Apostle Paul stood on Mars Hill at Athens, and the hill is called Areopagus. Acts 17:19, 22. Rising about 377 feet above the land below, it served as the meeting place for the Areopagus Court. It was an important meeting place where philosophy, religion and law met to be discussed. Why all the detail of Areopagus in Paul’s letters, and what is the significance? He had to portray the position of the Church attaining the highest position on earth, greater than any blessing tied to the Jewish nations. It pictures how the Gentile nations are now placed above them. In itself it is a message and part of the décor. It is not purely literal but symbolism also conveys a message. The most important message of the Apostle Paul was spoken at Mars Hill, and he was careful to choose the opportune moment. At Athens, Paul presented the Gospel in a most remarkable way. Similarly our Lord did not choose Judah to disclose His death and resurrection, but He chose Galilee.

Mark 9:31–32

For he went on teaching his disciples and said unto them, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after he is dead, he shall rise the third day. 32 But they did not understand this word and were afraid to ask him.
Twice in Greek it says that the Son of Man will be killed or be put to death in a violent manner, not in tune with the normal practices of His time. The words ‘they will kill Him’ are omitted in the Arabic and in the Persic version and instead it reads, ‘and shall put him into a sepulchre’.
Talking about His death, it says in Isaiah 53:9 that He was placed in a tomb with the wicked. He was put with the rich when he died. It was prophesied hundreds of years before His death, and they maintain that the grave of Joseph of Arimathea did fulfil the prophecy.
The people who condemned Jesus to be crucified with malefactors on His side called it ‘the place of the skull’, thus His grave was meant to be ‘with the wicked’. His body would have been placed there if it was not due to the interference of Joseph of Arimathea. He placed Jesus in a rich man’s grave. They believe it is one of the many prophecies to confirm Jesus’ real identity as the Messiah.
We need to take a fresh look at this verse. Who are the rich? Is it Joseph of Arimathea or someone else? No, the ‘rich’ are the Church, who is buried symbolically with our Lord in the grave. Symbolically we await the rapture of the Church to be forever with our Lord. After two days (2,000 years) the Church will resurrect with Christ and in the eyes of God they are the rich, endowed with the firstborn right, sharing the richness of both heaven and earth.
Then why did it say that the grave of the Lord was with the wicked? In the eyes of the world, our Lord is dead and buried. Yes, He is with the wicked to redeem them from sin. With Christ’s imminent return to earth, the first on His agenda is the rapture of the Church to be totally part of heaven. They mostly belong to the ten lost tribes of Israel, as the Jewish state refused Him.
We have been buried with Christ through His baptism into death, and likewise we too will be raised with Him. Rom. 6:4. In God’s eyes we have already resurrected with Christ, but to the world we are reckoned as dead. Paul says in Ephesians 1:3–14 that God's great purpose for us is to be His brilliance. We are His greatest treasure. To the world we are reckoned as dead. Indeed we died with Christ and we forfeited our privileges on earth. He made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions. God raised us (the wicked) up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the unparalleled riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Eph. 2:5–7. The Old Testament is packed with prophecies awaiting fulfilment. Many Christians believe that God ransacked all of Israel’s promises to be imparted to the Church today. Jesus says ‘He has other sheep, which are not of this fold,’ Jn. 10:16, and they can only be sheep that are outside Judah. In other words He has the ‘other’ who are reckoned as all the other sheep from another fold. The other fold are the ten lost tribes of Israel and Jesus makes it clear that they too will hear His voice and follow Him, and

eventually there would be only one flock and one Shepherd. This is the mystery of the universal body of Christ, the church. Eph. 3:6. We need to understand God divided Israel in two, the two and the ten tribes of Israel. If Judah rejects Him, the other ten lost tribes of Israel will hear His voice. Unbeknown to mainstream Christianity the two and the ten tribes are united in one fold and the Gentile nations are part of them. The great mystery is that the wicked are in His grave and they are blessed immensely. If the two tribes of Israel reject Him, then the ten tribes of Israel (other sheep) will adhere to Him. It is the one or the other, and God's blessings are not spilled.

The disciples were not ready to understand the mysteries Christ was talking about. They could not absorb the new twist in God's plan. In Acts 1 the disciples did appreciate them, as everything was made known to them since Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Well, we can ask the question when our Lord discovered that He would die an awful death. It may have been early in His life when we read of Jesus at the age of twelve years, when his parents lost Him at the temple. His mother Mary and guardian Joseph had thought that Jesus was with other members of the family who had gone up to Jerusalem and returned and when they couldn't find Him they returned searching for him. After a few days they found him in the temple listening to and questioning the teachers there. It is recorded that they were astonished at Jesus' understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures which speak of his suffering.

Earlier our Lord did speak to His disciples about his death, but in riddles as: 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' Jn. 2:19, and 'as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.' Jn. 3:14. Even the warnings about bearing the cross and to follow Him, Matt. 10:38, did not convince the disciples that He had to die at an early age. Somehow the true nature of Jesus did become clear to them, and they had to learn that Jesus' way to glory, and theirs, was a path of suffering and death.

Some believe when Christ prophesied about the nature of His kingdom in Matthew 6, then He must have thought His kingdom would be revealed soon. Only in the few weeks leading to His death and resurrection did He mention His premature death. Didn't He know about it earlier in the Gospels? I believe He did but the disciples were not ready to digest all the details.

'The third day' is mentioned to assure them that His death would be speedily followed by His resurrection. They did not grasp it wholly as His grave was merely watched, and it was a vague kind of expectation with no real conviction. When He did resurrect, it came as a surprise.

Our Lord said He would be killed and He does not say what manner of death He would die. On a later occasion He said He would be 'crucified'. Matt. 20:19.

He had to go to Jerusalem where the great Sanhedrin sat, and they would accuse Him of being a false prophet to finally condemn Him to death in the most public manner, tallying with His great humiliation. The word 'must go' does not merely say He had to go to Jerusalem, but it entailed

much more; it is the established ‘way’ He had to go that led to His suffering, death and resurrection.

Mark 9:33–37
And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves on the way? 34 But they were silent; for on the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest. 35 Then, sitting down, he called the twelve and said unto them, If anyone desires to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all. 36 And taking a child, he set him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said unto them, 37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receives me; and whosoever shall receive me, receives not me, but him that sent me.
They reached Capernaum in Galilee and as yet they did not depart to Jerusalem. Our Lord lived in Capernaum, and they were likely at His house, where a lame man was lowered from the roof to be healed. When He was in the house, He asked them, what were ye reasoning? There had been some dispute along the way which of them should be the greatest. They thought our Lord favoured Peter, James and John to accompany Him to the Mount of Transfiguration, and it may have triggered some misunderstandings. That is social hierarchy, and in the animal world we find complex social structures. There are various factors, and the disciples must have mulled upon them. In the Bible we foremost have the priest and the second in the hierarchy are the soldiers, and finally the workers. In the old English traditions you had the bishops (ruling the Churches) and the present king or queen did rule the Churches. Secondly they have the knights or the soldiers and finally the workers. Amongst the Apostles, Peter was the most often mentioned of them all, and about James hardly anything is written except when he got beheaded. From John we don’t know much, but he was a prolific writer. We do read of another James in Acts 15. The other apostle is Paul, and much is written about him.
In God’s hierarchy things are totally different. The least will be the greatest in heaven! Jesus had to teach them something. He took a child and said whoever receives ‘one’ like this child receives me. They had to learn that the people who are humble and self-denying are the ones who resemble Christ the most. We will be appointed as kings and priests, the highest in any possible hierarchy. We will be the teachers in heaven and thus we need to be humble, sitting at Christ’s feet.
Jesus had to change their thinking and I believe many today need to refocus their minds. We all desire a little recognition and esteem and there is nothing wrong with it, but they can overwhelm our lives.
Imagine how hurtful it was to Jesus when He tried to explain His great humiliation and the kind of death that faced Him, while the disciples were arguing over who should be the greatest. A person who chases the world soon forgets his true calling in life. They forget they were cleansed from their old sins and soon they start thinking in terms of power, fame, wealth, position and name. They sensed that Jesus was about to set up His kingdom, looking forward to becoming rulers in His kingdom. To set our minds on this causes us to be gripped with jealousy, envy and rivalry. I

believe they spiritualised His words, and His thoughts did not pierce their heart.
When our Lord sat down to teach His disciples, He is portrayed as a Teacher teaching His disciples. The Apostle Paul said he was educated at the feet of Gamaliel in strict conformity to the Law of our Fathers. Acts 22:3. The scholar sits or stands humbly beneath the raised seat of the teacher. It is generally agreed by the phrase ‘brought up at the feet of someone’ is according to Jewish custom to be taught by someone, like the disciples at Jesus’s feet. Today our Lord is seated on the right hand of God, Heb. 1:13, and He too teaches us daily. He is our High Priest and any priest in the Old Testament had to teach the people. Eze. 44:23.
The Lord told them they are mere servants or the working class and there ought to be no rivalry. Well, what does a servant do? He (or she) carries out the will of his master. A servant doesn't tell his master what to do. As God's servants we have no other agenda except to do His will. If we are humble and learn to suffer, we will be rewarded handsomely. The suffering we now experience is nothing compared to the glory to be revealed to us. Rom. 8:18. Our only way to glory is to be like a child and to suffer daily, thus to be a servant. A king is at the service of the people and thus he needs to be aware of the plight of the suffering nation. If he ignores their plight, his kingdom will not prosper.
This humiliation is explained in one of our Lord’s parables in Luke 14. Jesus noticed that all the guests who went to a wedding feast were trying to sit near the head of the table, in the places of honour. He gave them some good advice saying when you are invited to a wedding feast, don’t sit in the seat of honour thinking you are more famous than the others. Instead, take the lowest place at the foot of the table. Then when your host meets you, he will come and say, friend, we have a better place for you! Then he will honour you in front of all the other guests. If you choose the place of honour, you run the risk of being humiliated in the sight of all the guests.
Children have a way of believing everything you say, and they swallow it as gospel truth. It's only when they grow up that they tend to question everything. The currency of the kingdom of heaven is faith. So for the first part Jesus is telling us, ‘have faith like a child’. We are taught each day and need to absorb everything in faith. If any person refuses the Word of God, then the apostles were told to shake the dust from their feet, and the greatest reason is the preaching of a diluted Gospel, and it is no gospel at all. It allows compromise, and it seeks to please man and it’s powerless. Diotrephes is a classic example and John in 3 Jn. 1:9, 10 wrote of him. He loves to be first, refusing to welcome the other apostles into ‘his’ church. He spreads gossip and is not kind. He spurs others to follow his poor example, to excommunicate anyone who opposes him. As a ruler he sat at the gates of the Church, determining who are fit to enter and who are not. If we are like Diotrephes, then the Word of God will become powerless. If our aim is to be the head of the church, then we can close the Bible. Such people only use the Bible to assert their own authority. It is empty.
We are like young students in a college and we are expected to be obedient servants with the prime reason to become both priests and kings

in a total new creation. We have a very high calling and our teaching is never complete. Paul in Philippians 3:13, 14 tells us that we have a high calling and it motivates him to live in a suffering world. There is a great prize to be won.

Many Church leaders today refrain from the idea of seeing themselves as children, rather wishing to be called bishops or cardinals. On earth we are always children and we need to esteem our brother greater than ourselves. This passage addresses us and it is not solely for child evangelists. Whoever desires to be first needs to learn how to be the least of all the brethren.

Mark 9:38–40
And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name and he does not follow us; and we forbade him because he does not follow us. 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not, for there is no one who does a miracle in my name that can then speak evil of me. 40 For he that is not against us is for us.
The demons are the ‘lower class’ in the hierarchy of Satan. The disciples rebuked someone who did cast out the demons, thinking they did good, but our Lord was not amused. The disciples argued he did not belong to their ‘club’ or ‘Church’ as some pastors who reason that all Christians need to belong to them, as all the little chicks are gathered by one hen. Today we are part of a socialistic culture and wish to do everything together, but obviously not here. God does not work with groups of people but rather He deals with individuals.
Some people study this passage and ask if any Christian can live outside the body of Christ? Certainly not. Salvation is found in Christ only. 2 Tim. 2:10. We need to study these verses carefully. In this passage a man did cast out demons, but he was not affiliated with Jesus and the disciples. Our Lord remarked he was doing good, thus the disciples must not oppose him.
First, take note of what is not said. The man was casting out demons, but there is no mention of him teaching a false doctrine. The only thing John is upset about was the fact that the man was not one of the followers of Jesus. By this, John is not accusing him of not believing in Jesus or following after the teachings of Jesus; rather this man wasn't one of them. Jesus said if a man is not against Christ, then he must be for Christ. Keep this in mind and look at what John wrote later in his Epistles: ‘Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.’ 2 Jn. 9. Thus the insinuation is when Jesus said that this man was for them, he was teaching proper doctrine in accord with Jesus’s teachings. He was not a false teacher casting out demons. If the man was a false teacher, then by which power was he casting out demons? It wouldn't have been his own because we don’t possess such power. It couldn't have been God's if he was teaching falsely because God would not have supported a false teacher. Nor could it have been the Devil because

demons are on his side anyway. Matt. 12:27–28. The only logical explanation is that he was casting out demons by the power of God.
The real lesson being taught here is if a reborn Christian teaches the Word of God to any of his friends or neighbours, then the Church of Christ is established. It doesn't matter if the man never went to another church. Adhering to the truth creates the Church or the vibrant body of believers. That is the reason why the church has never ceased to exist despite several concerted efforts to suppress it. All it takes is an honest person to study the Bible and it will blossom to life.
This passage also shows the vulnerability of any denomination claiming to be the ‘real’ Church, thinking they can trace their heritage to the founding apostles like Peter. This is utter nonsense. The Church can spread rapidly when Christians teach others to follow Christ, but sometimes a Christian can accept Christ by simply reading the Bible, and God will guide them. John did not accuse the man of abusing Christ's name. His sole charge is ‘he does not follow us’.
Demons are skilled to know the difference between those who are true exorcists and those who are insincere. Acts 19:13–16. No person who performs genuine miracles is able to speak evil of Christ.
He was not part of ‘them’, and today he too may be overlooked as an individual believer outside the Church’s institution. Today the Churches harbour many traditions, and many reborn Christians are barred from them, unwilling to comply with the Churches’ rules, but they do belong to Christ.
Today we are driven in a socialistic world, and we are taught to share our responsibilities. Christ deals with us individually and never as part of a group. Mainstream Christianity shelters behind their pastors and their Churches’ viewpoint. I worked in an accident and emergency department, and we saw many patients having serious fractures. Usually the next morning, at the trauma meeting, their future care and type of operation are discussed. Then all the consultants and radiologists come together, making a joint decision. If anything goes wrong, then they cannot blame an individual doctor, as a joint decision is made. We cannot hide behind such reasoning, as we will face Christ alone. What matters is if we abide in the truth. There are many who labour for Christ outside the scope of mainstream Christianity, and they seem to annoy the establishment.
Our Lord says that the true exorcists will not profane His Name, but sadly we do find many who try to drive out demons but profane His Name. They think they have mastered the demons, but they do return with greater vengeance. Once they tried to claim power over a demon by saying, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches.’ Acts 19:13–16. The spirit was not amused by it, and it caused the possessed man to attack the men who faced him. The fake exorcists were the sons of a Levite chief priest and thought they were pretty important and powerful enough to command the obedience of fallen angels. They thought all they needed to do was to use Jesus’ name, kind of ‘abracadabra’. The demons knew the men were only pretending. They tried to act like God, and they should not have taken the Name of Jesus Christ lightly.

During the time of Moses (Num. 11:26–30), we have a similar backdrop. Two men named Eldad and Medad stayed behind in the camp. They were listed amongst the 70 elders who were esteemed as the elders of Israel. For some reason, they did not go to the tent (Tabernacle). Prior to that, Moses complained that he was incapable of governing the complete nation. It was too burdensome for him. The Lord told him a council of 70 men was willing to help him, and they were solemnly set apart for that task. That meeting was spectacular, very similar to the day of Pentecost. When the 70 were being set apart, the Spirit fell upon them, and they prophesied. While they were prophesying at the Tabernacle, a young man came running towards them at the Tabernacle, giving the tidings that two men were prophesying in the camp. Upon questioning them, it turned out that two of the seventy men, whom Moses had nominated for the council, did prophesy as the other 68 men at the Tabernacle. For some reason, Eldad and Medad did not go to the Tabernacle. Nevertheless, the Spirit descended on the two, exactly as it descended on the other 68 men. Eldad and Medad should have presented themselves along with the others at the Tabernacle. It was punishable. Accordingly, Joshua the son of Nun, who was a trusted minister of Moses and from the tribe of Ephraim, suggested that they should be silenced. Moses thought differently. He argued if Eldad and Medad were prophesying, and it was true, then the hand of the Lord was upon them. It is similar to the man in Mark 9:38 who did rebuke the demons, as the Lord's hand was upon him.

In Hebrew, the name Eldad can be translated as 'God has loved' and Medad as 'love'. There is something noteworthy about them. Our spiritual eyes detect many similarities between the 70 men who prophesied and the formation of the Church. The history of Eldad and Medad is an optional reading for Pentecost. That is when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Church in power. We refer to that day as the formation of the Church. Then the disciples spoke in tongues, and the apostle Peter preached to them boldly. 3000 men repented to be followers of Christ, and they were baptised. It happened 1200 years before Pentecost, a foretaste of the Spirit that filled them in a special way. The 70 men prophesied, but it was short-lived, and it did not continue. Similarly, early in the Church's history, they stopped speaking in tongues, as everything about God's salvation plan became known. The speaking in tongues was phased out when the Apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians letter.

In the New Testament period, local elders continued to lead the Church. In addition, the 70-member Jewish Sanhedrin helped lead the religious body at Jerusalem. In the early Church, elders became synonymous in many cases with pastors and served as the local church leaders.

Another question is how do the two men fit into God's salvation plan? I believe the 70 elders do depict the Church, and with the rapture of the Church, they will be swept into heaven, and then no reborn Christian will be left on earth. It will leave a great vacuum on earth. Mind you, in the Book of Revelation ch. 11, we read of the two witnesses who will be sent to Jerusalem to preach the Gospel. The only two witnesses to be left on earth will be Moses and Elijah, and I believe that Eldad and Medad do picture them. After 3½ years, they will die a natural death, and after three

days they will resurrect to be taken to heaven. They too were with our Lord on the Mount of the Transfiguration, and their real value is when the great tribulation commences. Their mission is to preach the Gospel at Jerusalem. They will be part of the Church, unlike the Old Testament believers who are not part of the Church. I believe in the rapture of the Church before the great tribulation commences. Once we are gone, there will be no believers on earth except for Moses and Elijah. It is a valid argument for the rapture of the Church.

Eldad and Medad caused some ‘stir’, but the Spirit did rest upon them as well, so they prophesied in the camp. The young man (possibly John in the Book of Mark) who witnessed this ran to Moses to tell him what happened, and Joshua the son of Nun overheard them and protested. He told Moses to stop them prophesying. For what reason is Joshua or Ephraim named here? Somehow Ephraim has to do with the calling of the Church, and the Church is with Ephraim and not with Judah. The firstborn right is with Joshua, and he was the head of the tribe of Ephraim, and as the firstborn of Israel, he had greater rights than Moses.

Moses’ response to the two men who prophesied is: ‘Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them all!’ Then Moses returned to the camp with the elders of Israel. There is no valid reason to excommunicate Eldad and Medad. We can compare that history to Christ’s second coming to earth. With the rapture of the Church, we will be citizens of heaven, and then our foremost duty will be to preach the Gospel to the Jewish nations at Jerusalem and Israel. We as the Church are placed above natural Israel, and we are obliged to teach them. We are the sons of God and will be like the angels. As during the Old Testament times, the angels did visit our earth, and we will have a similar task. The 68 (Church) will support the believers who repented during the great tribulation from heaven, and the other two witnesses (Eldad and Medad) will be on earth at Jerusalem. The two witnesses will warn the people of Israel of the impending dangers that will face them. Rev. 11. We will be like the angels who visited Lot and his wife before Sodom and Gomorrah was judged.

When our Lord did ascend to heaven from the Mount of Olives, the Gospel was preached beginning at Jerusalem, and it did spread to all four corners of the world. Similarly, with Christ’s second coming to earth, the preaching of the Gospel will commence with the two witnesses at Jerusalem, and with the Day of the Lord, Israel will be saved. From ‘all Israel’, the 144,000 servants will be gathered to reach every nation on earth. Once their mission is complete, Babylon will be judged at Armageddon, the last nation to yield themselves to Christ.

Jesus gave the apostle John and the other disciples some good advice. He said any person who is not against us is for us. Let him go his own way, as God is doing His work in him. Matthew 12:30 phrased it differently, saying whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

We are all one in Christ, and we who belong to Him will naturally assimilate a like-minded believer, like two magnets attracting each other.

If that person does not belong to Satan, then he will repel the body of Christ.
Christ is the good Shepherd that gathers his sheep to Himself, and Satan is the wolf that catches and scatters the sheep and seeks to kill and destroy them. Since there is such great difference between Christ and Satan, none ought to be neutral; whoever is not on the side of Christ is reckoned as an enemy who scatters the sheep. There is oneness amongst us, and we can reflect the prayer of the High Priest or John 17, when our Lord prayed for our oneness, to be one in Him. If we are not His possession, then we belong to Satan.
In the following verse, Matthew 12:31–32 says whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. The Son of Man is Jesus of Nazareth, and He is part of the old creation, but the resurrected Christ is different, as He is totally part of the new creation. Some of the people who cried ‘Crucify Him’ were the same people who repented on the day of Pentecost. The people who oppose the teachings of Christ do sin against the Holy Spirit.

Mark 9:41–48
For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name because ye are of the Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. 42 And whosoever shall be a stumbling block to one of these little ones that believe in me, it would be better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. 43 And if thy hand cause thee to fall, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that can never be quenched, 44 where their worm does not die, and the fire is never quenched. 45 And if thy foot cause thee to fall, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that can never be quenched, 46 where their worm does not die, and the fire is never quenched. 47 And if thine eye cause thee to fall, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell, 48 where their worm does not die, and the fire is never quenched.
In verses 36 and 37, our Lord addressed the children, but in verse 41 it is not them but ‘you’. This time it is their care for the other believers in Christ, as the person who cast out the demons in verses 38 and 39. The man did epitomise the other believers who are also part of the fold.
If we remain humble to serve our fellow servants, then we will not lose our reward. It is not gaining something but losing something if we are disobedient. There is a reward set aside for us in heaven, and we run the risk of losing it. 2 John 1:8 says, ‘Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. ’
The unbelievers who repel the Gospel will be punished more heavily than those who never heard the Gospel. Our life on earth is like a stepping stone to heaven; some do take the step and are blessed with unending life in a total new creation, but if we refuse, our life on earth is wasted and senseless. We always have the opportunity to accept Christ late in life, as

Darwin did. I believe he did repent and never imagined his theory caused such great havoc.
Anyone who makes a ‘little one’ stumble, for him it is better to tie a millstone around his neck and then to jump in the water. It was their way to promote capital punishment. If someone repels the Gospel, it is better for them to die. In Romans 1, Paul says we have no excuse, and we can understand God from the creation. They refused to recognise Him as God or to commune with Him; thus their thinking became futile, and their hearts foolish – they became blind, as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their empty life is meaningless. To repel the Word of God is disastrous, and at best it will be better for them to die, not to be confronted with the Gospel of Christ at all. The other scenario is to willingly reject the risen Christ. Their punishment will amass.
This chapter addresses the many stumbling blocks we encounter in life, and they are likened to our hands, feet and eyes. This is highly figurative speech, and our Lord advises us if our hand restricts us from entering the kingdom, then it is better to amputate it. Someone suggests it is logical if we receive the mark of the beast on our hand in the end times, but I doubt this, as it might be placed on our forehead! The hand, or the foot, or the eye represents the instruments by which sin is committed, and it may be a means to entice us to sin. We have relatives and friends who are useful to us (likened to our own hand, foot and eye), and if they do draw us into sin, then at best it is best to cut them off from us, to sever our links with them, lest they draw us into hell. It is also better for us to enter the kingdom maimed than to never enter the kingdom at all. In the following chapter, we have a rich man whose riches prevented him from entering the kingdom of God. At best, it is best for him to rid himself of the riches – as then it will be easier for him to accept Christ. The rich and successful people in life are more difficult to reach with the Gospel than the poor. Our treasure is in heaven, where no moth can corrupt them. At all costs, we need to enter the kingdom of God, not to be stripped of our reward in heaven. v. 47.
Hell is placed lower than the earth, and the heavens are placed above the earth. Hell is the place of the dead, awaiting their final judgement on the ‘last day’, and then they will be resurrected to be punished to return to the deep. Hell is not always the ‘lake of fire’ as in Revelation 20. Finally, the complete old creation, hell and all the unbelieving people will be thrown into the pool of fire. The dead will perish, and hell will not exist. In the pool of fire, NOTHING will remain.
Whatever got into the fire will perish like hay and stubble, but not the precious metal.
It is unimaginable that the wicked will be fried in the lake of fire for millions and millions of years.
Whatever is inside the fire is combustible, and everything will be burned to finally disappear in smoke.
Hell and the lake of fire is a greatly contested subject, and it is impossible to define the concept in a few sentences. We are mortal, and whatever is thrown into the lake of fire will perish. Please allow me to explain this topic:

Do we have an immortal soul?

Did God create man with an immortal soul, and if we are taught this, where is it taught in the Bible? God made man in the image of Adam but not of the same substance that God possesses. Our Creator is composed of Spirit, and He is eternal. Humans were formed from the clay. Adam became a ‘living soul’, and he was not immortal when God breathed life into his nostrils. Gen. 2:7. Shortly afterwards, God allowed Satan to tempt them. Eve told the devil that they were told not to eat or touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’s fruit, or else they would die. Satan’s response was that they would not die. Gen. 3:2–4. Now, if man was given an immortal soul that lives on after death – meaning some form of life in another form – then we need to admit that the devil told Eve something true! Indeed.

If Adam and Eve did not possess something that remains conscious after death, then the devil lied to Eve regarding the consequences of taking the forbidden fruit.

God did chase them from the Garden, and His justification in doing this was simple. If they remained in the Garden, both of them would have been tempted to eat from the Tree of Life. If that happened, they would have lived forever. Gen. 3:22. If Adam and Eve were created with an immortal body, then God’s concern makes no sense for them! God barring them from the Tree of Life would not have made any difference to both Adam and Eve, since they already possessed an eternal soul. In other words, eating of the Tree of Life would not have given Adam and Eve something they did not already have! He did not want his greatest creation, in a rebellious state of mind, to be dumped in a miserable existence for all eternity. Today Satan continues to spread the lie that we do possess a never-dying ‘soul’.

Natural human beings are not immortal. The Bible is clear, and the only surety we have to live for all eternity is to accept the resurrected Christ. 1 Cor. 15:50–55; 2 Tim. 1:9–10; Rom. 2:7; 6:23. Yes, the resurrected Christ is the SECOND Adam, and if we are born again, then we are totally part of the new creation, blessed with endless life. Indeed, with our rebirth, we are created in the image of God.

Interestingly, the terms ‘immortal’ and ‘immortality’ are not found in the Old Testament, and the word ‘immortal’ is used only once in most translations of the Bible, 1 Tim. 1:17, referring to one of God’s (not man’s) attributes. The original Greek word from which it is translated is aphthartos (Str. No. G862). That word occurs only six other times and is usually translated as ‘incorruptible’, meaning something that can never decay or perish, something that endures.

The Bible opposes the teaching that every human has a soul that continually lives after death. Our heritage is not that noble, as we are moulded from the clay of the earth to become a ‘living soul’ or a ‘living being’. Once we stop breathing, our mortal bodies will decay. The word ‘soul’, translated to Hebrew, is nephesh (Str. no. H5315). Strangely, it is the same word ‘souls’ when it is translated as fish (Gen. 1:20), birds (1:22), cattle and other animals (1:24) and us (2:7). So nothing glorious about the word ‘soul’.

The Bible does not say man ‘has’ or ‘possesses’ a soul, but rather he is one. In Greek, it is psuchē (Str. no. G5590), virtually equivalent to the word nephesh in the Hebrew. It is the only New Testament word translated as ‘soul’. It generally means a living, breathing creature. Mortal man is not immortal, and they will die to be resurrected again. Christ is our only hope of eternal salvation. No one will be punished for all eternity, as he requires immortality. We are mortal, and we need a hand from above. Certainly, at the Great White Throne, or at the ‘last day’ with the second resurrection, God will never make the unbelieving sinner eat from the forbidden fruits plucked from the Tree of Good and Evil to make him live forever!

Eternal Torment?

The traditional view maintains the ‘lost’ will be damned for all eternity in a lake of fire, where there is no respite. Hell is very disturbing, since everyone has friends or family members who have died not accepting Christ. The prospect of seeing them suffer an agonising hell fire for all eternity will bother us immensely. I think the doctrine of eternal hell fire is a doctrine of cruelty. It is hard to imagine that the resurrected Christ would wreak vengeance on His disobedient children by torturing them for all eternity!

In the Old Testament (Hebrew), the word used to describe the realm of the dead is sheol. It simply means ‘the place of the dead’ or ‘the place of departed souls/spirits’. The New Testament (Greek) equivalent to sheol is hadēs, which is also a general reference to the dead. Thus Hadēs = Sheol = a place of the dead, awaiting the ‘last day’.

The Greek word geenna is used in the New Testament for ‘hell’ and is translated from the Hebrew word Hinnom.

The lake of fire is mentioned in the Book of Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14–15.

I believe the lake of fire will spell the end of the unbelieving world as a means to END their existence. They are annihilated by God in the second death after suffering a temporary punishment.

God will not resurrect the wicked to punish them with everlasting pain. Rather, the wicked will be resurrected in a mortal body to be punished. It will end in their final demise, to die an eternal death, leaving only smoke as its final reminder. Hence the smoke is evidence that the fire has done its work, which ‘rises for ever and ever’. Rev. 14:11; 19:3.

The Christians who preach eternal torment are keen to quote Isaiah 66:12–24. Indeed, the wicked will be punished by ‘fire’ (v. 15), and they will meet their ‘end together’ (v. 17). The crucial verse in this chapter is verse 24, saying: ‘And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.’ Isaiah’s account of the fate of the wicked is possibly inspired by the time when the Lord slew 185,000 men belonging to the Assyrian army during the reign of Hezekiah. We are told that ‘when men arose early in the morning, behold, there were all dead bodies.’ Isa. 37:36. The righteous people will witness the ‘dead bodies’, and mind you, they are not the living bodies. What they saw is destruction and not eternal torment. The

‘worms’ are mentioned with regard to the dead bodies because it speeded their decay, who were deprived of a proper burial.
Frequently it says in the Bible that ‘the fire is not quenched’ to imply a fire that consumes everything in its path (Eze. 20:47–48), reducing everything to ashes. Amos 5:5–6; Matt. 3:12. It makes sense that both the worms and fire speak of their total and final destruction. The image of a voracious fire is simply intended to prove that everything is burned up, having nothing left to consume. It has nothing to do with the everlasting punishment of an immortal soul.
Daniel 12:2 speaks of the resurrection of both the good and the evil people: ‘And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.’ They maintain the godly will be raised to a never-ending life, and the wicked will be raised to a never-ending disgrace. The word ‘contempt’ in Hebrew is translated as ‘deraon’, and it also appears in Isaiah 66:24, where it is translated ‘loathsome’, describing the unburied corpses. The ‘contempt’ is the stench of the decomposing bodies, and not their never-ending suffering. The idea of an everlasting punishment of the wicked in the Old Testament is negligible and doubtful. On the contrary, the evidence for utter destruction of the wicked on the Day of the Lord is clear. The wicked will ‘perish’ like the chaff (Ps. 1:4, 6) ; it will be dashed to pieces like pottery (Ps. 2:9, 12) ; will be slain by the Lord’s breath (Isa. 11:4) ; will be burnt in the fire ‘like thorns cut down’ (Isa. 33:12) ; and it ‘will die like gnats’ (Isa. 51:6). ‘For behold, the day comes burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.’ Mal. 4:1. No mention of the all-consuming fire. John the Baptist followed Malachi, and he cried in the wilderness, summoning the people to repent in view of the approaching fire of God’s judgment. Matt. 3:7–12. Did Jesus teach eternal torment?
Jesus uses the term ‘hell’ seven out of the eight times when the word ‘hell’ is found in the New Testament. The word is translated from the Greek word geenna. The only other reference is found in James 3:6. We need to examine what Jesus taught us about hell. The Greek word geenna is a transliteration of the Hebrew ‘valley of the sons of Hinnom’, located south of Jerusalem, and we did speak of it when we touched the subject ‘the worm shall not die’. In ancient times, the valley was allied with the practice of sacrificing children to the god Moloch (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 23:10). That valley spelled death, and the complete valley became a consuming fire, incinerating the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in the days of Hezekiah (Isa. 30:31–33; 37:36). Jeremiah predicted that the place would be called ‘the valley of slaughter’ because it would be filled with the corpses of the Israelites when God judged them for their sins. ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the valley of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter: for they will bury in Topheth, because there is no room elsewhere. And the dead bodies of this people will be food for the beasts of the air, and for the beasts of the earth; and none will frighten them away.’ Jer. 7:32–33. We noticed that

Isaiah foresees the same tragic encounter on the ‘Day of the Lord’. Isa. 66:24.
When we study the seven references to the word geenna in the Gospels, we need to note that none of them says that hell – geenna – is a place of endless torment. What is eternal or unquenchable is not the punishment but the fire. We observed earlier that in the Old Testament, the fire is eternal or unquenchable in the sense that it consumes the dead bodies completely. It will not be partly burned. This assumption is supported by Christ’s warning that we should not fear human beings who can harm the body but the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell (geenna). Matt. 10:28. Hell is the place of final punishment, which results in the total destruction of the body. Luke 12:5 is the parallel passage, and the verb ‘destroy’ is not used. Instead, it says: ‘Fear him who, after killing the body, has power to throw you into hell. ’
We need to study the frequent New Testament word everlasting, forever or eternal. The words are translated from the Greek word aiōn, appearing more than 100 times in the New Testament. Unfortunately, the English words ‘eternal’ or ‘everlasting’ do not accurately render the meaning of the Greek word aiōn, which literally means timelessness with limits, while the English word ‘eternal’ or ‘everlasting’ is limitless. It is confusing.
I quote a few:
‘And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever. And immediately the fig tree withered away.’ Matt. 21:19. The meaning of the words ‘henceforth and forever’ may also imply that Israel will never be able to continue, to live or exist as part of the old covenant, as it spells death.
Most theologians today cite that passage as proof that the state of Israel is dead, reasoning that the fig tree which portrays Israel is dead, and it will never bear fruit again. They are tricked by the word ‘forever’ or aiōn. The word aiōn is also translated 38 times as ‘world’. Galatians 1:4 is a classic example.
‘That he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.’ In this verse, the Hebrew word ‘world or aiōn’ is restricted to Satan’s present age. There are many similar examples. Rom. 12:2; Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:10. The word ‘forever’ is captured to a time limit while Satan rules our world, and once the new creation is complete, then the domain (old creation) of Satan will end. Once we are swept into the total new creation, then all of the old creation will vanish in flames.
Jude 7 says that Sodom and Gomorrah were punished with an eternal (aiōn) fire. It is evident that the fire that destroyed the cities is eternal, not because of its duration but because of the lasting results. The consuming fire is ‘eternal’ not because it lasts forever but because it ended the miserable existence of Sodom and Gomorrah to never surface again. Similarly, the complete old creation will vanish, never to be remembered again – it will cease to exist.
A fitting example of this is when Paul spoke of those who reject the Gospel. It says: ‘They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his

might.’ 2 Thess. 1:9. Their punishment is eternal destruction or annihilation. The results are lasting. The Apostle Paul never wrote about geenna or hell but only once about the eternal destruction.
The eternal life we received from God (John 3:16) is everlasting and unending because the Scripture tells us that the ‘mortal bodies’ of the believers will be made ‘immortal’ by Christ with His return to earth. 1 Cor. 15:53. Once we accepted Christ, we did eat from the Tree of Life.
In the best-known text of the Bible, we are told that those who do not ‘believe in him’ will ‘perish’, not receiving ‘eternal life’ (John 3:16). The ultimate fate of the lost is destruction by eternal fire and not punishment by eternal torment. The notion of the eternal torment of the wicked can only be defended by accepting the ancient Greek opinion of their immortality and the durability of the soul, a concept foreign to Scripture.
‘Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth.’ Four times in the Gospel of Matthew, we are told that on the Day of Judgment ‘there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth’. Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30. Christians today assume that the ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ describes the conscious agony experienced by the lost for all eternity. A careful look at the setting of each text suggests that their ‘weeping and grinding of teeth’ was their own doing, as they flatly refused the risen Christ. The Psalmist says: ‘The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away; the desire of the wicked shall perish.’ Ps. 112:10. The Psalmist is clear that the gnashing of their teeth is their remorse to be totally excluded from the blessings of the new creation in Christ. They are doomed to extinction.
The Book of Revelation
• In Revelation 14, John sees three angels announcing God’s final judgment. When the third angel cries out with a loud voice: ‘If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of his holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshippers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.’ Rev. 14:9–11. This is written in highly metaphorical language. John’s use of the imagery of the fire and smoke to describe the fate of Babylon, the city responsible for alluring God’s people into apostasy. The city ‘shall be burned with fire’ (Rev. 18:8), and ‘the smoke from her goes up for ever and ever’ (Rev. 19:3). It does not say that Babylon will be burned for all eternity. Obviously not, because the merchants and kings bewail the ‘torment’ they see and cry: ‘Alas, alas, for the great city. . . In one hour she has been laid waste. . . . and shall be found no more’ (Rev. 18:10, 17, 19, 21). It is evident that the smoke of the torment of Babylon’s fall will ‘rise up for ever and ever’ and it captures the complete destruction of Babylon, as it ‘shall be found no more’ (Rev. 18:21). The striking similarity between the fates of the apostates (Rev. 14:9–11) and the fate of Babylon, where both are tormented by fire whose smoke ‘goes up for ever and ever’. The destiny of Babylon includes the

destiny of those who did share her sins. Both experienced the same destruction and annihilation.

The phrase ‘they have no rest, day or night’ (Rev. 14:11) is mentioned earlier in this chapter. John uses the same phrase ‘day and night’ to describe the living creatures who praise God (Rev. 4:8) and again later when the martyrs are serving God (Rev. 7:15), Satan accusing the brethren (Rev. 12:10) and the unholy being tormented in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). It says that there will be no break or respite in the suffering of the followers of the Beast on earth, but in itself it does not say that it will continue forever. The suffering will continue day and night until the ungodly are completely destroyed at Armageddon.

• The Lake of Fire. To define the meaning of ‘the lake of fire’, we need to examine its four occurrences in the Book of Revelation, the only Book in the Bible where the phrase is found. With the first reference (Rev. 19:20), we are told that the beast and the false prophet ‘were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur’. The second reference (Rev. 20:10) describes the outcome of Satan’s last great assault against God: ‘The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.’ God’s throwing of the devil into the lake of fire increases its inhabitants from two (beast and the false prophet) to three. The third and fourth references are found in Revelation 20:15 and 21:8, as then all the wicked will be thrown into the lake of fire. The fundamental question is whether the lake of fire represents an ever-burning hell where the wicked are supposed to be tormented for all eternity or whether it symbolises the permanent destruction of sin and sinners. You decide in the context of the previous verses.

• ‘The Second Death.’ John clearly explains that ‘the lake of fire is the second death’ (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). Some Christians interpret ‘the second death’ not as the ultimate death but as the ultimate separation of sinners from God. The second death denotes the ultimate separation of the ungodly sinners from their Creator’s love. The Bible says clearly that there is no consciousness in death. The ‘second death’ is the total opposite of ‘eternal life’. Throughout the book of Revelation, John keeps explaining himself, touching all the difficult issues. For example, he explains that the bowls of incense are the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8). ‘The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints’ (Rev. 19:8). The coming to life of the saints and their reigning with Christ a thousand years ‘is the first resurrection’ (Rev. 20:5). Following the same pattern, John clearly explains that ‘the lake of fire’ is the second death (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). If an unbelieving person had to die today, then it will be known as their first death. They will resurrect again on the ‘last day’ to face God, and then they will die the second death before the complete earth and heaven enters the new creation. The new will swallow the old. The annihilation view of hell has been associated mostly with ‘sects’ like the Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses and many other smaller churches. It made many evangelicals reject this view, as they didn’t want to be thrown into the same boat as the ‘sectarian’ churches. We retain the right and duty to continually test our beliefs in the light of the Scriptures. We need

to test everything but need to retain the good, even if it is taught by the ‘sects’. There seems to be a new way to appraise the truth. Some Christians suppose if any Adventists or liberals hold an opinion, then that opinion or reason is valid enough to be deemed wrong. Many truths are discovered once we are prepared to compare one verse with the other, avoiding public norms in an open debate. Emotionally, I find the concept of eternal torment too brutal and do not understand how some Christians can air such an un-Biblical view.
Whatever hinders us from entering the kingdom of God are serious issues, and the Apostle Paul says ‘be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure’ (2 Pet. 1:10). We are like running in a race, and our attention needs to be focused. We may need to forfeit many things in life to attain our full reward. It will cost us many things to finally reap a great reward. We as the Church are the first to enter the kingdom of Christ. Israel will follow us, and finally the remaining nations on earth will be part of His kingdom.

Mark 9:49–50
For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltness, with what will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.
We have two parallel verses, namely: ‘For every one shall be salted with fire’ and ‘every sacrifice shall be salted with salt’. Thus everyone is likened to an offering, and the words ‘fire’ and ‘salt’ are alternative expressions. Salt and fire portray the Word of God. We who are part of Christ, the salted grain offerings in Leviticus 2. The salt is the life-giving Words of God, and if our words are not salted with His Word, then we are useless for God’s kingdom.
Our Lord told His disciples, ‘You are the salt of the earth.’ Matt. 5:13. Salt has many attributes. It flavours our food, preserving foods like fish and meat to prolong its life. Jesus said we are the salt of the earth. If the food lacks flavour, then we bin the food. We are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14), and the light reveals God’s Words in a very dark world. The subject of Matthew 5 is light and salt, and together they depict the Word of God. The Light is God’s Word, and we are the bearers of the light. We need to talk about the hidden things (the mysteries of God) ; the very words our world loathes (Col. 4:3), and our words need to be seasoned with the salt. ‘Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.’ Col. 4:6.
If our words are sprinkled with salt, we reflect God’s Word in a positive manner, speaking words that exhort men rather than confuse them. We need to follow the Lord Jesus’ example here on earth, who continually quoted the Bible. Jesus regularly said, ‘Is it not written?’ Frequently the apostles quoted the Old Testament. Since they are our examples, we too need to quote the Scriptures for our individual needs. Jesus quoted Scriptures for several different reasons: to overcome evil, to heal a broken heart and to teach the disciples.
Unbelieving Israel, resembled by Lot’s wife who became a pillar of salt. Today it is a definite tourist attraction. The pillar of salt is like a statue to

remind us that the laws of Moses secure no life for Israel, and it is deemed dead when we compare it to the truths of the new covenant. Presently, the old covenant with its laws is an artefact in a museum, and we can study them carefully, but they are not written to us to do them with our hands and feet but to study them. The old covenant will not sustain us. In God's perspective, the Jewish religion is dead as the pillar of salt. We can study the Laws of Moses with the knowledge of knowing that each word is fulfilled by the risen Christ.
'For everyone will be salted with fire'. Mark 9:49. The fire will rid us of all the 'hay and stubble' that burns so easily, but the imperishable (salt) will continue all through eternity. Every sacrifice that is salted in the Levitical offerings reflects God's eternal covenant with Abraham.
When Elijah was taken up into heaven to be separated from Elisha, the men of the city tested Elisha and told him that the water was bad, and the land is unproductive. Elisha performed his first miracle by telling the people to bring him a new bowl and put salt into it. So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, 'This is what the Lord says: I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.' Immediately the water changed and remained healthy. When Elisha healed the water, he took a new bowl, and he said put salt in it. He went to the spring, and he did the same, saying, 'This is what the Lord says: I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.' The salt is the Word of God that breathed new life into the water. It became like a spring of life-giving water. Salt portrays eternal life, foiling decay. Salt is NaCl, and $NaClO_2$ is sodium chlorite, which is commonly used in nearly all the water reservoirs of the world. Chlorine dioxide, its by-product, is a broad-based biocide that kills spores, bacteria, viruses and fungi. To date, no organism tested against ClO_2 has proved any resistance to rid the water of germs and parasites. The new bowl is the Lord Jesus, and the salt in the bowl is the Word of God that dwelt in Him.
There are special salts to soften the water, such as rock salt. A good water softener will last many years, and even salt as old as 30 years may still work. Many need little maintenance, besides filling them with salt occasionally. The water that constantly trickles through the salt is cured. Ezekiel says, on the day you (Israel) were born, no one cared about you. Your umbilical cord was not cut, and you were never washed, rubbed with salt, and wrapped in cloths. Salt will cleanse them.

Mark 10:1–10
And he left there and came into the borders of Judaea and beyond the Jordan; and the multitude joined him again, and he taught them again as was his custom. And the Pharisees came to him and asked him, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?' tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, 'What did Moses command you?' And they said, 'Moses suffered to write a bill of divorce and to put her away.' And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this commandment. But at the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his

mother and shall join to his wife; and they that were two shall be made one flesh, so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.' And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he said unto them, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another commits adultery against her. And if the woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she commits adultery. '

When Jesus spoke about marriage, He had a different marriage in mind—a far greater union than the man–woman relationship. What bothered Him then was the bond between the Creator (God) and Israel, His chosen nation. They were married at Mount Sinai, but it ended in a divorce. He was not perturbed about the man–woman relationship, but the union between God and Israel did bother Him immensely.

Our Lord travelled down from Galilee to Jericho, along the eastern fringes of the River Jordan. Close to Gilgal, He crossed the River Jordan, entering Judaea. If He had travelled down on the western fringes of the River Jordan, then He would have travelled in Samaria.

From Jericho He travelled to Jerusalem to be finally crucified. The Pharisees approached him regarding the 'marriage' issue—a tricky question, asking why God divorced them, why He is silent. They tempted Him, questioning: 'Is it lawful for a man (God) to put away his wife (Israel) ?' Jesus asked them what the law said.

The niggling issue here is that the man can send away his wife, but in the Bible, a woman can never send away her man. It is due to a greater typological reason: Israel can never send away their Creator (man), but the Creator can send away His wife (Israel). The Pharisees knew this.

He asked them: 'What says Moses?

'If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. You must not bring guilt on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.' (Deut. 24:1–4)

Obviously, the 'displeasing issue' in this relationship is the hardening of Israel's heart. The hardening of Israel's heart is due to their unbelief, following other men (gods). It ended with a letter of divorce. The 'something indecent' is their idolatry—following other men or gods.

For a husband and wife to be totally one is practically impossible. To be 'one' emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and financially is ideal but impossible. Even as one part of the body cares for the other body parts (the stomach digests food for the body, the brain directs our body, the hands work for the sake of the body, etc.), so each partner in the marriage is to care for the other. Each partner is no longer to see money earned as 'my' money, but rather as 'our' money. According to our legal system, man and wife cannot be one—as they can vote independently.

Everything the woman does cannot be in total unison with her husband, and the idea is ridiculed today. The Church and the government knew there are many unhappy couples, and in the past they arranged many dirty divorce tricks against their spouses. They were aware of the many loopholes, and thus it is easier to divorce today.

Moses says if the man cannot forgive his wife—like idolatry—then he needs to make a decision. He can either forget about the affair, to totally forgive her, or else he needs to end their marriage. Once the marriage ends, it cannot be amended again.

Similarly, God divorced Israel in the past, and He will never remarry Israel as part of the old creation, but He will marry them again as part of the new creation in Christ. Since Israel was 'sent away' in the Assyrian captivity, God is not bothered about them, and He will never mend an old marriage.

Deuteronomy 24:4 ends by saying: 'You must not bring guilt on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.' The inheritance is the land of Israel, and the widow has no right to the land. It belongs to God, and unrepentant Israel has no share in it. Today the land is sinning, and Tel Aviv has been trumped as the world's number one gay city in the world.

It will not end that way, and God calls Israel (the 10 lost tribes of Israel) to repentance. Isaiah 49:6–12 does speak of the Church that is formed today with many encouraging words, like:

- 'I have also given thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou may be my saving health unto the end of the earth. '
- 'Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of saving health I have helped thee; and I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of people, that thou might awaken the earth, that thou might inherit the desolate heritages. '
- 'Behold, they shall come from far; and, behold, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.' (Australia in Latin)

Isaiah 50, the next chapter, commences with the following words:

'Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities ye are sold, and for your rebellions was your mother put away. '

The bill is Israel's divorce, and they are the 10 lost tribes of Israel that were sent into the Assyrian captivity. Indeed, there is much talk of a marriage between Israel and God.

God Married Israel with the Entry of the Law

- To begin with, God is the Bridegroom. 'For thy Maker is your Husband' (Isa. 54:5). 'I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord (Jer. 31:32).
- Jehovah considered Egypt the birthplace of Israel. The official marriage of Israel took place at Mount Sinai, where Israel promised to be faithful to Jehovah her Husband. 'And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do' (Ex. 19:8; 24:3,8; Deut. 5:27).

- Following their marriage, they celebrated the occasion (wedding) in the desert. Moses mentioned that to Pharaoh when he planned his exodus from Egypt (Ex. 5:1; 10:9).
- The bride was filled with kindness and she enjoyed her beauty. . . 'I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness' (Jer. 2:2). The Lord did marry the nation of Israel. 'Then I passed by you and watched you, noticing that you had reached the age for love. I spread my cloak over you and covered your nakedness. I swore a solemn oath to you and entered into a marriage covenant with you, declares the sovereign Lord, and you became mine' (Ezek. 16:8).
- The covenant the Lord made with Israel is the Ten Commandments, and they received the tablets at Mount Sinai (Jer. 31:32). Jeremiah urged the nation to return to God with regard to their previous marriage agreement (Jer. 3:4).
- As with any marriage, there ought to be a dwelling for the bride and Bridegroom. We may query who owns the land of Israel. Actually, their new home belongs to the Husband, and He is entitled to it. Read the following: 'The land is mine' (Lev. 25:23). 'My land' (2 Chron. 7:20). 'Your land' (Ps. 85:1). 'The land of the Lord' (Isa. 14:2). 'In my house' (Jer. 11:15). 'In the land of the Lord' (Hosea 9:3). 'My land' (Joel 1:6; 3:2).
- That marriage is endowed with many privileges, but Israel had to remain faithful, as it is vital to the Lord. The people living in the land of Israel were forbidden to commit adultery, meaning they were forbidden to worship idols. Their Husband is the Maker of heaven and earth, and they will demean God whenever they worship other gods (Ex. 20:2–5; Ex. 34:10–16).
- The Lord demands faithfulness.

There Was Talk of a Marriage When Jesus Was on Earth, But It Proved Untimely

In the New Testament, there was talk of a marriage, but sadly it never happened during Jesus' time. John the Baptist said: 'He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore that joy of mine is fulfilled' (John 3:29). Without doubt, our Lord is the bridegroom, and John the Baptist is the friend of the bridegroom, who rejoiced when he heard Him speak. Our Lord did come to the earth to become Israel's bridegroom, as only the resurrected Christ qualifies. Bear in mind, John the Baptist was from the tribe of Levi, and our Lord was from the tribe of Judah.

The Bible says that both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus were family, but it is difficult to know how. There were great expectations when the Bridegroom (Lord Jesus) appeared, as a marriage would have been settled between Him and the bride, Israel. In the previous chapter (John 2), there was a marriage, and the water was turned into wine. The atmosphere was idyllic, and peace would have followed, with the Lord in their midst. After

the proposed marriage in John 2, and the mentioning of the Bridegroom in chapter 3, a harvest would have followed in chapter 4.
Wait—isn't the Church the bride of Christ? We need to study the Old Testament, and then it's clear that Israel and Judah were the bride of a failed marriage with God as part of the old covenant. Since Christ's resurrection, Israel did reject Him (Rom. 11:12). If they had received Christ, then they would have become His bride. We are now in the interim, and the remnant of today is the Church, and we are the 'body of Christ'. In the New Testament, there are 24 references to the body of Christ! We have a unique relationship with our Lord, and it exceeds the previous relationship Israel had with Jehovah, or the relationship between a husband and wife. In the Old Testament, that extraordinary bond of the Church with Christ was barely discernible, but the Apostle Paul mentioned it frequently.

Comparing the New with the Old Marriage
Ezekiel 16
This long chapter articulates God's conduct concerning Israel, His wife. It is easy to gather that the marriage hurt both parties. In short, the chapter reiterates that:

- The Lord made a covenant with Israel (v. 8).
- Afterwards, Israel became very affluent, a recognised kingdom (v. 13,14).
- Early in Israel's history, they were admired by many men, but they used their charm to lure them (v. 15).
- The adultery of Israel, as narrated by her Husband, is gloomy. Israel wasted the gifts she received from her Husband, giving them to other men (gods) or nations (v. 17–19, 25).
- When we study Israel's unfaithful behaviour, we may doubt if such a marriage can last. At some point, it is doomed to failure (v. 32–35). It is difficult to understand that a marriage that was previously blessed by God can be torn apart.
- That marriage ended with a letter of divorce, caused by Israel's adulterous behaviour.
- The letter is legally binding. We can solicit the reasons for a divorce between God and Israel (Deut. 24:1).

The first reason for the divorce is that the Husband (God) was aware of Israel's shameful deeds.
The second rationale is that the woman did not receive any mercy from her Husband (Isa. 50:1 & Jer. 3:1, 8, 20). Initially, God was lenient towards the 10 tribes of Israel, but they refused to take any note of Him. 'And I said, after she had done all these things, "Return to Me," but she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it' (Jer. 3:7). Their stubbornness was enough reason for the divorce letter.
'I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery' (Jer. 3:8). God was compassionate towards the two tribes who were sent into the Babylonian exile. The Jewish nation did return from their captivity, but once they

crucified the Lord, they slid back into the Egyptian exile. Today the Jewish nation did return to Israel, but only under the watchful eye of God. Israel belongs to God, and the unbelieving Jewish nation's future in Israel is doomed. Today Judah is in exile, as their 'Husband' died on the cross. Judah's past Husband died (Rom. 7:2,3), and now they are freed from all the obligation they had due to their previous marriage. According to God, the world did die with Christ on the cross, protecting us from any law or obligation on earth. The law of Moses concerns only the people who are alive, but we all died with Christ long ago. Thus the law has no hold on us. Read, amongst others, Jeremiah 31:31–34.

The new covenant concerns both tribes—namely Israel (10 tribes) and Judah (2 tribes). It is not the previously failed covenant God made with Israel under the Old Testament. Israel dishonoured the previous covenant (old marriage) with the Lord, but there will be a new covenant. 'The days' refers to the time after Christ's resurrection. The old covenant is made void, and the new covenant is honoured today. The law of the old covenant was written on stone tablets. The tablets broke as Moses descended the mountain, as it proved too burdensome for Israel to carry. The new laws will not be written on stone tablets—no, they will be written on our hearts, and they wouldn't be taxing.

Under the old covenant, Israel proved incompetent and powerless, but with the new covenant, God will be their God forever. We, as part of the new covenant, will be a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people… 'And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation' (Ex. 19:5,6). Israel will live in harmony with God, and they will know Him face to face. Jezebel, Ahab's wife, is a picture of Israel living under the old covenant. Her name means 'untouched', as she was separated from her husband. The woman (Israel or Jezebel) refused the husband (God), worshipping other men or gods.

'How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man' (Jer. 31:22). God will never remember Israel's past sins. Their faith in Christ will be deemed enough for their righteousness (Rom. 4:5). The new covenant will cause the change (Jer. 50:4,5; Ezek. 16:60–62; 37:26–28). The covenant will be everlasting, lasting all eternity. 'Fear not; you will no longer live in shame. Don't be afraid; there is no more disgrace for you. You will no longer remember the shame of your youth and the sorrows of widowhood. For your Creator will be your husband; the Lord of Heaven's Armies is his name! He is your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of all the earth. For the Lord has called you back from your grief—as though you were a young wife abandoned by her husband, says your God' (Isa. 54:4–8). The 'shame' refers to Christ's crucifixion. Israel killed their previous Bridegroom, but that will be forgiven. God says that He will be their Husband under the new covenant (v. 4,5). Presently we live during the time of God's silence, as it is aptly referred to as 'for a small moment have I forsaken thee' and 'I hid my face from thee for a moment' (v. 7,8). All the unpleasantness with the previous marriage will be forgotten once they accept Christ.

The Book of Hosea refers to the two marriages, and he was told to marry a harlot. His first marriage ended being a total disaster. God encouraged Hosea to marry a harlot, as via that marriage He wanted to articulate Israel's history. He named his children aptly, to epitomise our dispensation. His one daughter was called Lo-Ruhamah, meaning God is not bothered about the house of Israel. In Hebrew, the word Lo-Ruhamah is translated as 'no mercy'. The name of the other child was Lo-Ammi, which means that Israel will not be God's people under the umbrella of the old covenant. Then the 'whore' decided to leave Hosea.

In Hosea 3, he had to find another whore, and I believe it was his former wife. The 'whore' (Israel) was then bought back with Christ's crucifixion. He did pay the ransom price with the idea to redeem Israel with His own blood—He paid the full price. After Christ's resurrection, the 'whore' will be for a 'long time' without a husband. The Jewish nation were abandoned since they refused the resurrected Christ and were forced into widowhood, for 2000 years.

'And I said unto her: "Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee." For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days' (Hosea 3:3–5). This gloomy picture portrays the Jewish nation today as a people having no king, prince, sacrifice, statue, ephod, and teraphim.

In the near future, there will be a new marriage. The big question is:

Who Is God's Future Bride—Israel or the Church?

This new marriage is not a 'patching up' of the previously failed marriage between Israel and the Lord. It will be an entirely new marriage. The old marriage is structured on the principles of the old covenant between God and Israel at Mount Sinai, and the new marriage will be based on Christ's resurrection. They are miles apart.

Within the confines of the Old Testament, it was considered evil if any man dared to remarry his previously divorced wife. It was detestable. 'The former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she is defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance' (Deut. 24:4). The reason is for a strict typological reason. God discarded the 'old' as part of the old creation, and He will only deal with the 'new' as part of the new creation. Trying to mend a failed marriage is worthless and time-consuming. The new creation discards the old, as everything will become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Christ is the new creation and similar to the born-again Israel on the 'day of the Lord'. They both died, and literally speaking, Israel did die on the 'day of the Lord', when they were doomed to die. He raised them from the 'dead', preparing an escape route for them through the Mount of Olives. The Apostle Paul says that Israel is now free to marry again!

'So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she marries another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law

and does not commit adultery when she remarries. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him, who was raised from the dead' (Rom. 7:3,4).
Since Christ's resurrection, Israel did reject Him (Rom. 11:12). If they had received Christ, then they would have become His bride. Today we live in the interim, and His remnant is the Church, the 'body of Christ'. Our unique relationship with our Lord cannot be compared to any marriage on earth. That is not a man–wife relationship as we know it today: We are like Eve, who is part of Adam's body. Adam was asleep when a part of his body (rib) was removed. Whilst in a deep sleep or being anaesthetised for 2000 years, Eve was created. The Church has a special relationship, born during the time of God's mystery. There are many similarities between us and Eve, who is part of Adam's body. Even though they were seen as two people, they were cloned, and in essence they are one. It never says that Eve was the bride of Adam.
To end that topic, we need to read Isaiah 62:1–6.
In these verses, Israel is feminine or the bride, and the Church is the Bridegroom as part of Christ.
@

Bridegroom	**Bride**
For as	a young Man
so shall	your sons
and as	the bridegroom rejoices
so shall	your God

There is an obvious relationship between the bride and the bridegroom. It is a fourfold parallelism. The Bridegroom is the young man, the sons, and God. In the above verses, the risen Christ is not portrayed as the 'Ancient of Days', but rather as a young Man. The risen Christ is the Bridegroom with the sons or the Church
The bride is the 'virgin', the newly reborn Israel under the new covenant. That body of believers will develop on the 'Day of the Lord' when they shall call on the name of Jehovah. Christ and His body, the Church, will marry the bride Israel. That is the reason why we, as the Church of Christ, need to love the Jews. They are our future bride (Rev. 19).
God Deals Differently with the Two Houses of Israel—Jeremiah 3In this chapter, we will learn that God sent away the 10 lost tribes of Israel with a divorce bill. The reason is they followed many harlots. It happened with the Assyrian captivity, and as yet, the 10 lost tribes of Israel did not return to the land of Israel. The reason why the Jewish nations were sent into the Egyptian captivity is their Husband (Jesus) died. God deals differently with the two women: the 10 lost tribes of Israel and the Jewish nation. This complex history is easier explained in the history of Aholah and Aholibah.

When the Lord spoke to Ezekiel, He said Samaria is Aholah or the northern kingdom of Israel. Their capital was Samaria, and Jerusalem is Aholibah, referring to the southern kingdom or Judah.

‘The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. . . And the names of them were Aholah the elder and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names; Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah’ (Ezek. 23:1–4).

Aholah or the 10 lost tribes of Israel were sent away due to their idolatry, and Aholibah (Judah) ended their marriage when their Creator or Husband died on the cross.

Jeremiah 3 speaks frequently of the two women—namely Israel and Judah. We will commence with verse 1. The first question is: ‘If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again?’ The answer is a definite no.

The second question is if the woman did return, will the land be polluted completely? Yes, as it is confirmed in Deuteronomy 24:4.

God’s response to Israel is: ‘But you have played the prostitute with many lovers; yet return again to me. ’

Is it possible for them to return to God? No, not as part of the old covenant, but it is possible to be reunited with God as part of the new covenant. There will be a ‘new bond’ between the risen Christ and reborn Israel.

Presently the world (old creation) is condemned, and there is no communication between God and man, but once the new creation did appear with Christ’s resurrection, things will change. The previous husband and wife died, and now there is sight of a new marriage or bond. Jeremiah 3 looks ahead to the formation of the Church, and the 10 lost tribes of Israel are the first to taste the fruits of the new covenant. They did heed the invite of God. The Apostle Paul speaks frequently of our special bond with Christ.

‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the Church’ (Eph. 5:31–32). This is a direct reference to Genesis 2, as Paul relates to the simple union between Adam and Eve. They concern Christ and the Church, and not our marriage to our spouse. The unique bond between Adam and Eve portrays the true bond between Christ and the Church. We are totally part of Christ, similarly to Eve who is shaped from Adam’s body.

The words: ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh’ (Gen. 2:23,24; Mark 10:6–9) must make us foremost think of Christ and the Church and not our earthly relationships as husband or wife. We are one flesh with Christ, and today this special bond we have with the risen Christ is not possible, even in the most perfect of marriages.

Adam’s own words: ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man,’ is prophetic in nature. We can argue that we are one flesh with Christ, as the Church is His body. Unarguably, the first Adam is only a shadow of the

‘One’ to come. Adam never had to marry Eve, as they were one. When Adam was in a deep sleep, God took the side of him to mould Eve. Whenever in the Old Testament a person or a prophet does sleep—as Daniel—it portrays the time of God’s mystery, or our time of waiting. For the past 2000 years, God is dealing differently with us.
After the rapture of the Church, the Jewish nation will accept Christ, and then there will be a new marriage between Judah and the risen Christ. Whenever in the Old Testament we do read about Christ, then between the lines, the Church is also mentioned. When our Lord appears with His second coming to earth, then we will accompany Him. When our Lord died on the cross, ending the dominion of the law and its curse, then we too died, and we did resurrect with Him, to be seated with Him in heaven. That is how God sees us, and we too need to see ourselves as detached from this world and all its miseries. We are totally bonded to Christ, and nothing will sever us. Our bond with Him will last for all eternity.
‘Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate’ (Mark 10:9).
We can study Jeremiah 3 in a different light, as God makes a clear distinction between Judah and the 10 lost tribes of Israel. He sees them in a different light. Judah is mentioned in verses 7, 8, 10, 11, and 18, and Israel is specifically mentioned in verses 6, 8, 11, 12, 18, 20, 21, and 23. God favoured Israel to Judah.
The Lord said to Jeremiah: Israel committed adultery, worshipping other gods, and they did not return to Him. Their faithless sister Judah noticed God divorced faithless Israel because of her adultery, but her sister Judah had no fear, and she too resorted to prostitution. Israel’s faithless sister Judah did not learn from Israel’s experience, and they refused to return to God.
God’s final remarks were that Israel is less faithless and guilty than her treacherous sister Judah! (3:11) Therefore, Jeremiah was to give this message to the 10 lost tribes of Israel.
‘O Israel, my faithless people, come home to Me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever.’ He will bring you back to the land of Israel from wherever they were scattered.
Notice in Jeremiah 3, our Lord speaks often to Israel and Judah, but the special invite in verse 12 is to Israel and not Judah. ‘He will give you (Church) shepherds (pastors) after my own heart, to guide you with knowledge and understanding.’ They will not miss the ‘Ark of the old covenant’, as Christ Himself is in their midst. The bulk of the Church will be the 10 lost tribes of Israel, and they will spread the Gospel, making all the nations honour the Lord. They will no longer stubbornly follow their own evil desires.
Verse 18 is like the hinge of this chapter. It says: ‘In those days the people of Judah will join the people of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your ancestors as an inheritance. ’
The norm today is the 10 lost tribes of Israel and not [the land of] Israel. In Acts 15, we discovered there were some dispute between James the brother of Jesus, the Apostle Peter, and Paul. Peter says in verse 11 that ‘we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they (Gentile) are’. Thus the norm today is the Gentile nations, and the

Jews need to comply with the Gentiles. There is no favouritism, and at best the Jews need to sever all ties with Judaism.
After the rapture of the Church, the norm will be different, as then God will concern Himself foremost with Judah and not the 10 lost tribes of Israel. He will send His two witnesses to Jerusalem, and on the Day of the Lord, the Church will appear with Christ on the Mount of Olives. On that awful day, the 10 lost tribes of Israel will repent and join Judah to evangelise the world with the 144,000 servants—12,000 from each tribe of Israel.
Prior to Moses' death, he blessed all the nations of Israel as Jacob did in Genesis 48 and 49. In Deuteronomy 33, he only spoke a few words about Judah (v. 7) and nothing about him being the king at Jerusalem. Moses blessed Joseph or Ephraim elaborately (v. 13–17) and affirmed that he is the real firstborn. Today the Christians are too eager to annul the blessings of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, to wipe them under the carpet. After the 10 lost tribes of Israel disappeared in the Assyrian captivity, the lost sheep of Israel are mentioned more frequently than Judah in the Old Testament. When Jesus walked on earth, He sided more with the lost sheep belonging to Israel and not with Judah, who were steeped in the law.
When we compare Mark 10 with Matthew 19, we will note more issues were addressed by our Lord. Mark 10:12 and Matthew 19:9 end with the same words: 'and if the woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she commits adultery.' Following this, the Book of Matthew 19:10–12 begins the dialogue with the words: 'The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry." Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs (castrated men) who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it. "'
Jesus mentions the eunuchs in the context of whether it is good to marry. Jesus identifies three types of 'eunuchs' here: natural eunuchs (born that way), forced eunuchs (made eunuchs by others), and voluntary eunuchs (those who choose). Natural eunuchs include those who are born with a physical defect, but they also comprise those who are born with no real desire for marriage or sex. Forced eunuchs are those who have been castrated for whatever reason. Voluntary eunuchs are those who, in order to better serve the Lord in some capacity, choose to forego marriage. God calls some people to remain single. Paul speaks of those who serve the Lord in their unmarried state (1 Cor. 7:7–9). Our Lord wanted to direct His disciples' attention to eternal issues that far outweigh our short earthly existence. Any suffering or inconvenience we endure today will be paid handsomely for all eternity.

Mark 10:13–16
And they brought young children to him that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. And Jesus seeing it, became angry and said unto them, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me and hinder them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say

unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.' And taking them up in his arms and putting his hands upon them, he blessed them.

Firstly, Jesus tells us we will not enter the kingdom of heaven unless we become like a child. We need to change our frame of mind and think like children think. Not that we become immature and act childish in the traditional sense, but we need to accept things in simplicity. Children have a way of believing everything you say and believing it as fact. It's only when they grow up that they tend to question everything. The currency of the kingdom of heaven is faith. It's what moves God's heart, and what the great people of God are known for. Foremost, Jesus is telling us to have faith like a child. The humility of children is very evident. Even though they may compete with each other in games, their humility is so astounding! They were also thought of as insignificant until they are 12 years of age—and then their hormones seem to drive them, making them doubt everything. Teaching them at school will become more difficult. Essentially, Jesus is telling us to humiliate ourselves in order to be esteemed by God. Continually the Bible tells us that our duty is to be meek, and He will exalt us at the right moment. When Jesus mentions 'the little ones' (whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones), He is referring to all His disciples. There is no 'big' disciple. Jesus, in His ministry, attracted the 'unimportant, the unattractive, the downtrodden, the despised tax collectors, and the blind'. They were all welcomed by Jesus and became His disciples. The Apostle Paul says: 'God has chosen the foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak to shame the strong' (1 Cor. 1:27,28). As followers of Christ Jesus, our humble calling is to be known as the 'little ones'. Our time of glorification will come. When our Lord embraced the children with His arms, it pictures the Church as part of Him. He cares for us.

Mark 10:17–23

And as he was leaving to continue his way, there came one running, who kneeled before him and asked him, 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said unto him, 'Why dost thou call me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother.' And he answered and said unto him, 'Master, all these I have observed from my youth.' Then Jesus beholding him loved him and said unto him, 'One thing thou lackest: go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me, taking up thy stake (if thy desire is to be perfect).' But he, saddened by this word, went away grieved, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus, looking around, said unto his disciples, 'How hardly shall those that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!'

Many Christians find the story of the 'Rich Young Ruler' to be one of the saddest of all in the New Testament. It is moving to see an earnest rich young man, who at one moment was running to Jesus, kneeling at His feet, who later walked away disheartened by His message. When he ran to

Jesus, he made up his mind. He did not linger like Lot at Sodom or wait for a more convenient time like Felix. He knelt before Jesus. It took the rich young ruler lots of courage to come to Jesus, to join a group of poor fishermen. He called Jesus ‘Good Master’. He saw in Jesus what many failed to see. He said, ‘What shall I do’, as he had a real concern for his spiritual welfare. Jesus looked at him and loved him.
The story of this Rich Young Ruler is often preached, first to get more tithes from the churchgoers and secondly to show that ‘the love of money is evil’ and we should give up everything for Jesus.
It seems as if they prompt us to sell everything to give our money to the poor, or the Church, to enable us to have our treasures in heaven. The message made the man very unhappy, leaving on a sad note, as he was very rich. That message is true for all of us and not only the rich young ruler, when we think the law can justify us. Jesus purposefully asked him something that he could not achieve, trying his best to abide by the law, like Nicodemus (John 3). The good works of the law (thinking it can enrich us) proved intolerable, a yoke too heavy to bear (Acts 15:10). Very rarely does the Bible single out a person whom Jesus felt a love for, as in this story. It is clear that Jesus loved him deeply, and it is apparent from the disciples’ astonishment when they asked: ‘Then who can be saved?’ Jesus’ love never fails, and even though it seemed impossible for the man to be saved, yet with God all things are possible. I believe we will see the Rich Young Ruler in heaven.
In the Book of Luke 18:18, he is named a ruler, and in the Book of Matthew 19:20, he is known as a young man. He was very rich, and it seemed to be an obstacle for him.
His question to the Lord was: What must I do to inherit eternal life? That was his first mistake.
We learn from Scripture that all our works will never suffice, as only Christ’s redemption, with His death and resurrection, can redeem us. We will never be redeemed due to our works, as only our solid faith in the resurrected Christ is desired. The Apostle Paul writes about ‘the works of the law’ six times in the Book of Galatians, and it’s always negative. Law opposes grace, and the law proved to be useless, as our bodies cannot comply with it. The rich young ruler had to be born again, like Nicodemus. By definition, religion is defined ‘to be bound’ by rules and regulations and rituals, thinking it will boost our salvation. This is in stark contrast to the teachings of the most anti-religious person that ever lived—Jesus Christ. He taught us that the truth will set us free (John 8:32), and it is not our good deeds. ‘For it is by God’s grace that you have been saved, through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God’s gift, so that no one can boast about it’ (Eph. 2:8–9). Religion is man trying to reach God by his own efforts. Whoever shall keep the whole law and stumble in one point, he is guilty of all (James 2:10). If we try to live by the law as the rich young ruler, we will fail miserably. He knew he could not comply with the five commandments our Lord mentioned in this passage. It is humanly impossible.
If we believe there is something good inside of us, then we will have a natural inclination for the law. If we believe there is nothing good inside of

us, then we know it will be senseless to even try to comply with the law. We need a helping hand from above. Our Lord died and was resurrected to redeem us, and in God’s sight today, He sees us as if we never sinned. Thus the question of the ‘rich young ruler’—what do I need to do—seemed as if the anchor of the rich ruler was the law.
Then Jesus told him something that is not written in the Law of Moses—namely, selling everything he had to give to the poor. He left sadly, and the disciples remarked how difficult it is if you cling to your riches or material goods.
To be rich implies more than being rich physically. The Jewish nation boasted, as the Apostle Paul who were self-assured with all his credentials, but it made the Apostle [Saul] persecute the Church all the more (Phil. 3:4). In Luke 16, we read of a rich man and Lazarus. Mind you, the rich man portrayed the Jewish nation, and the poor man our Lord who humiliated Himself.

The Self-Righteous Pharisees and Scribes

The self-righteous, accusing Pharisees and scribes had lots of faith in their own righteousness and their contempt for these tax collectors and sinners who didn't measure up to their standards. They were deemed—or considered—as the accursed. Jn. 7:49. The Pharisees were ‘lovers of money’ (Luke 16:14) and they took offence when Jesus mentioned the unrighteous steward. Our Lord’s final response to the insulting Pharisees and scribes was the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen. The wearing of purple was associated particularly with royalty, and the linen was worn by priests (Ex. 28:39). The garments worn by this rich man were symbolic of royalty and the priesthood. The clothing of the rich man identifies him symbolically with the people of Israel, who were God’s chosen people. It also says that the rich man fared sumptuously every day. Figuratively, this represents the magnificent spiritual feast available only to the Jews. Even the Apostle Paul said to them (the Jewish nation) belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs… (Rom. 9:3-4). The Jews were truly rich, feasting on God's spiritual blessings. Yet these very gifts caused them to stumble because they prompted them to be self-righteous.
The rich man had a poor man, or Lazarus, at his feet. He was covered with sores. Lazarus is no ordinary name, but he pictures the remnant who patiently wait for God. In Hebrew, the word Eleazar or Lazarus is ‘God is my help.’ It is the remnant, and the real remnant of our world is the Lord Jesus who will save us. Instead of having great wealth, the dogs did come to lick his sores. The dogs portray the heathen nations, and it pictures that the redemption went to the heathen people (dogs). Don't forget that we as Gentiles used to be outsiders and used to be called the uncircumcised heathens (Eph. 2:11). Poor Lazarus pictures God who left His throne to become like one of us. The world despised Him and, similarly, our Lord who is scorned by the world and the religious leaders. God did choose the despised or the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are (1 Cor. 1:28). Similarly, in the history of Job, we learned that Job used

to be rich and he lost everything. Even the dogs licked his wounds, but later he became richer than before. He pictures our Lord who emptied Himself by taking the form of a slave and, when He found Himself in the form of a human, He humbled Himself even more, to become obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross (Phil. 2:7-8). The poor man died and he was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom, to the abyss. He did resurrect, and yet the Jewish nation—or the rich man's brothers—did not believe in the 'Resurrected' who lives forever.

At one moment, the Jewish nation wanted to enrich themselves when they wanted to force Jesus to be their king (Jn. 6:15). They had it in their mind, thinking He will deliver them from the Roman yoke. Our Lord withdrew Himself and departed alone to the mountains. He did not even take His disciples with Him, who may have been in the same frame of mind about a mundane kingdom, encouraging the crowds in their undertaking. His kingdom is not of this world; and He taught His followers to forsake the riches and the praises this world can offer. They merely sought a quick fix. Once we accept Christ, we need to distance ourselves from the rich Jewish traditions. Many Christians are lured by the Zionist movement and their rich heritage. Messianic Judaism is a movement merging Christianity with certain Judaism, to adhere to certain Jewish traditions.

The disciples were speechless, thinking the rich young ruler deserved a better answer. No, his trust in the rich Jewish culture will restrict him, and similarly his dependence on his wealth. There is a greater typological import with this passage, as we are called to trust the Word of God and not any religion that feeds on our flesh. It says the rich young ruler was young and, in God's eyes, Judaism was a relatively young religion. It stemmed from the Babylonian captivity and is considered much younger than the Laws of Moses.

What Happened to the Rich Young Ruler?

It is impossible to say, and neither is the Bible clear as to the fate of the 12 disciples. The title of the Book 'The Acts of the Apostles' is not the real chronicle of the apostles. It merely mentions the history of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and James who was martyred. Even more, what happened to the 70 others our Lord appointed? (Luke 10:1) Nothing is written of them. The Apostle Paul speaks of over 500 eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:5-7) and no word from them either. It is frustrating, but some history is traced orally, and some is written down.

However, there are many sources outside the Bible which do add some interesting facts, and some of them do speak of the rich young ruler. I do not blame you if you don't wish to read the following page, as it is not Gospel truth, but it may answer some possible questions we have. The Jewish Talmud records that Joseph of Arimathea was the great-uncle of Jesus, a younger brother of Mary's father! In 'The Traditions of Glastonbury' by E. Raymond Capt, he cites that Joseph of Arimathea was an international merchant involved in the tin trade in the British Isles. It helped him to easily gain an interview with Pilate when Jesus was crucified. He was a prominent man in both the Roman and Jewish worlds. Joseph also acted as a sort of father figure or mentor to Jesus between the

ages of 12 and 30. Most scholars have assumed that His stepfather Joseph died when Jesus was still young. As a close relative, it is possible that Joseph of Arimathea stepped in to help Mary, and Jesus accompanied him on his journeys. Some traditions maintain Joseph and Jesus's second homes were at Glastonbury, England. (Read - Did Our Lord Visit Britain As They Say in Cornwall and Somerset? by C. C. Dobson, 1944.) Well, the time came when the Sanhedrin finally caught up with Joseph of Arimathea and his faithful companions after Christ's ascension to heaven. The early Church was formed and they were persecuted immensely. Frederic Mistral wrote in his French book called Mireio (published in 1859) that Joseph of Arimathea and his companions were thrust into a boat with no oars, rudder or sails by the Jews, who were glad to finally get rid of them. They left the shore somewhere close to Mt. Carmel. The boat was tossed by the winds and drifted across the Mediterranean Sea, and the Jews thought they would perish at sea. They thought they had the better of them, reasoning God would cause their demise. Yet foresight carried the boat on a current to traverse the Mediterranean Sea to the coast of Provence, France. Miraculously, it landed on a sandy shoreline close to Marseilles, known today as 'Les Saintes Maries de la Mer' or 'The Holy Marys from the Sea'. The history of this miraculous sailing is quite common in Christian mythology. Whatever the explanation, the three female statues (Marys) are the subject of the fascinating 'Pilgrimage of the Gypsies', held each year from the 24th – 25th of May each year, to honour this occasion. Maybe each year since the early Church?
France received its Christianity directly from Jerusalem in the first century. Joseph of Arimathea was accompanied by 11 other occupants. According to the local folklore, three Marys accompanied them and together they weathered the Mediterranean storm—hence the name: Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer meaning 'Three Marys of the Sea'. According to some, they were Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the sister of Lazarus, and Mary Magdalene. The surprise of this legend is they claim that one of the occupants is Maximin, 'the rich young ruler.' He was one of the 70 men who were sent out by Jesus. The others were the blind-born man and Lazarus, and many others.
From Marseilles, Joseph with the other disciples continued going northwards through Gaul, passing through Limoges and Roscoff and across the English Channel before finally reaching Cornwall, where he established the first Christian Church in England (Ecclesiastical Annals, under section A. D. 35). They returned to Marseilles, spreading the Gospel or the Good News from the United Kingdom, and since the time of the early Church, they were the headquarters for the Christian people. They were always welcomed. The Jews spilled their chances when they abandoned the company of believers at the seashore, thinking they would drown.

Mark 10:24-26
And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for those that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier to pass a cable through

the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 But they were astonished even more, saying in themselves, who then can save himself?
The disciples had no idea what our Lord meant with this parable, and it ties with the dialogue our Lord had with the rich young ruler. The main thrust of this parable is we must not trust or rely on our earthly goods. Having earthly possessions is good for our nerves, but nothing more. Our money will not persuade the Apostle Peter at the pearly gates. The Lord told the rich man to sell everything he had, and in this conversation the material goods seem to express much more—the spiritual welfare of the religious leaders was at stake, as in the parable of the rich man versus Lazarus. Religion (our riches) will never be sufficient. Earthly goods do seem to settle our nerves, but the riches our Lord was talking about is much more.
'See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.' (Col. 2:8)
Later the Apostle Paul argues that human traditions with their many 'do and don't do' seem to be wise because they require strong devotion, self-denial, and also severe bodily discipline (Col. 2:23). It satisfies their hunger to progress and it comforts them. They think it enriches them. That is man-made religion. We who believe in the resurrected Christ are freed from every religious practice, making an end to the law. We embrace the new. Whenever we distance ourselves from all the religious practices and solely trust in the Resurrected, then we are free indeed. We will not embrace the 'one world religion' or the antichrist, but the real Christ, and our fortitude is to be outside the camp, bearing His reproach on earth (Heb. 13:13). Indeed, the disciples were confused, thinking that Jesus will fling open the doors leading them to the Millennium, but it proved otherwise. Our Lord continually named His disciples 'children', as they need to distance themselves from all pride. They had to accept the Word of God, having total faith in Him. Religion feeds on our old fallen nature, and the theologians think the law enhances them, but it's fake.
'But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Law) ' (Gal. 3:25). The mystery of Babylon the great is the combined false religions, the last stronghold of the world before the great fall (Rev. 17:5).

The Eye of the Needle
The eye of the needle is to enter the kingdom. There are many seemingly good ways to enter heaven via religion, but it will not suffice. There is a narrow way that will lead us to heaven but not if we are burdened by the load of the law. Bible symbolism is vital for us to understand this passage. How else can we explain the parable of the camel and the eye of the needle? How fascinating is this parable. The Hebrew word for needle is translated in Hebrew as Koph or 100. It is the 19th letter of the Hebrew alphabet and it is transliterated as our letter Q, and if it is written correctly it is like an object being pierced by a very large needle.
In the Bible, the 100 is to enter heaven and the symbolism of the tabernacle simplifies this. There were 3 entrances in the tabernacle

leading the high priest to the inner Sanctuary. The entrance gate to the tabernacle was 20 x 5 cubits, the door of the tabernacle was 10 x 10 cubits and the veil was 10 x 10 cubits. Thus, all three entrances were 100 cubits square. If the priest wanted to approach God, he had to enter the three 100-cubit-square doorways. Strangely, Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born, and I will not be surprised if they both share the same birthday. Incidentally, Christ is 'Abraham's seed' in the singular, and each believer of the Church is part of His body.

The number 10 is the Word of God as His Word was written on the two tablets of Moses, and the 10 commandments are the 10 Words of God. In Genesis 1, God 'spoke' 10 times, as in saying: 'Let there be light.' The fulfilment of God's Word (ten) is the 100 or 10^2. If in faith we accept His Word or the 10, then we are in the 'fold' secured by the number 10^2 or 100, free to enter His kingdom. The greatest example is our Lord who was exceedingly rich, but He became poor for us. He descended to the lowest place—the abyss—to die a shameful death, to atone for the sins of the world. We cannot comprehend how deep He descended. We too need to rid ourselves of all pride, knowing there is nothing good inside of us. Whatever we attained—we did so due to the grace of God. No religion on earth will better us.

Traditionally, it has been said that there was a gate in the walls of Jerusalem called the 'Needle's Eye,' through which a camel could squeeze with great difficulty if it had no saddle bags. Unfortunately, that is simply not true, as there never used to be a gate in Jerusalem called the 'needle's eye.' After all, it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and that is precisely what Jesus said. It is impossible for a person who trusts in his riches (religion), thinking it will enable him to enter the kingdom. It is time-wasting to even try. Their religious creed or adherence to the law will never open the pearly gates.

The 3rd letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Gimel, meaning camel. Thus, the 'needle's eye' and the 'camel' are mere letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Its numerical value is three, a prime number which cannot be divided.

The letter 3 are the promises of God. It expresses our thoughts and ideas that are drawn on paper. It is like the design of an architect on paper. It is not concrete, but it promises something substantial. With the 3 is captured the promised kingdom, the promises God made to Abraham. When it becomes flesh, the promises become tangible. The resurrected Christ made things happen. The promises are fulfilled once the Word became flesh.

'And the Word (3) became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.' (Jn. 1:14) The Old Testament saints had to wait for 4000 years until they could see someone who is truly God. In the Hebrew language, the verb for the word flesh is basar (Str. no. 1319) and it is found 26 times in the Old Testament. It is generally translated as messenger or good tidings. Our Lord did not become flesh (the messenger) with His birth at Bethlehem. No, He became the true Messenger with His resurrection from the dead, to open the portals to heaven and to spread the 'good tidings' to all humanity. Thus, the 'flesh' can be translated as the 'good tidings.'

He came to fulfil all the Old Testament promises as in Him everything is yes and amen.
‘Certainly, Christ made God's many promises come true. For that reason, because of our message, people also honour God by saying, Amen!’ (2 Cor. 1:20)
The number 3 has nothing in common with the trinity. The trinity is wrongly cited in 1 John 5:7, the only verse in the Bible to promote the teaching. Many translators refuse the soundness of the verse, believing it is wrongly placed in our Bible.
‘For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.’ The genuineness of this text has been called into question by many. It is not written in the Syriac, Arabic and Ethiopic versions; and neither in the old Latin Bible has it got it, nor the many Greek manuscripts; nor is it cited by many of the ancient fathers. I disagree with the trinity. The Apostle Paul testifies in Hebrews 5:5 and Romans 1:4 that the resurrected Christ became the Son via His resurrection, and there is no mention of Him being the Son before His resurrection.
Now, another interesting note is that John the Baptist was clothed with camel's hair (Mark 1:6). He announced the ‘good tidings’ of Christ, the one to finally fulfil all the promises God made. Having the camel's hide, I don’t think he had a ‘hump’ in his neck.
The number 4 is fleeting and it was the dispensation of the law. The dispensation ended when our Lord died to nullify the law (4). The Apostle Paul says that Christ is the end of the law to each who believes in Him (Rom. 10:4). The resurrected Christ opened the doorway (portal) to a total new creation or to the five. We need no CERN to activate it. Presently, we are part of the 5th dispensation, part of God’s greatest mystery, and soon when we appear with Christ on the Day of the Lord, then the mystery will be revealed to the world. The 4 is a step towards the 5, as the real promises were made to Abraham, but it is fulfilled in our dispensation (5). The dispensation of the Law was fleeting, as the old covenant used to hide the truths of the new covenant or the 5. Since we are acquainted with the 5—we have no need of the 4. We used it as a step leading us to the new creation in Christ.
Now, a needle has to do with entering the kingdom of God. A camel (3) cannot enter the needle (100). If we try, there will be an endless 33. 3333333 as the 3 cannot be divided into the 100.
If we are burdened by the law or any religion, then we will never enter heaven. It’s simply impossible. The people at the time of our Lord had a mathematical mind and they were smart. The camel pictures a believer who, in faith, journeys towards the kingdom, traversing a great desert. A camel is built to withstand the harsh conditions of the desert, able to tolerate drought and food shortages.
Camels can go up to seven months in the desert without drinking water. During such a time, they may lose nearly half of their body weight. They store fat in their humps, and by the way, they are not filled with water. As a camel goes without food, its hump starts to shrink. If a camel has no food, then its hump may disappear.

So, if the camel doesn’t store water in its hump, where does it store it? They are smart and very thirsty camels can drink up to 100 litres of water during a single visit to a well. There’s no evidence, though, that camels can store water for long periods of time anywhere in their bodies. Camels are just very efficient at using water, and they are well-adapted for dehydration. Its blood cells are tiny enough to keep circulating as the camel’s blood thickens from dehydration—but elastic enough to hold lots of water. If a thirsty camel finds an oasis, its red blood cells might balloon to more than twice their size.
Thus, the camels are tough creations who can easily escort us through the desert. It pictures any believer who crosses a barren desert, void of life. We journey from Egypt to the Promised Land Canaan. Our survival skills are that we have the water or the living Word of God inside our hearts, and the fat on the camel’s hump are our earthly blessings we are endowed with. The fat surrounding the entrails suggests man’s inner strength, his hope and his future expectations (Lev. 7). He can easily traverse the desert and it is visualised in Israel’s history when they safely crossed the desert, a 40-year journey, to finally enter the land Canaan. We will safely enter the new creation and we don’t need to fear. We need to hold steadfastly to the Word of God, lest we ‘dehydrate’, hindering our progress to be appointed as His sons.

Mark 10:27-31
Then Jesus looking upon them said, for men it is impossible, but not for God because all things are possible for God. 28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Behold, we have left all and have followed thee. 29 And answering him, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, there is no one that has left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake and the gospel’s 30 who shall not receive one hundredfold now in this time: houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life. 31 But many of the first shall be last; and of the last first.
The disciples were puzzled about the camel piercing the eye of the needle, knowing it is physically impossible. Our Lord spoke in parables to trick the people who were not spiritually minded. The secret is to examine the Scripture (John 5:39) to look beneath the surface. It is like peeling the different layers of an onion until we discover the truth. It’s not meant for sceptics.
A camel transmits faith, to believe the promises God made to us. We too are travelling to a better home, the heavenly Canaan, and we will enter the kingdom (100). The Apostles said surely no-one can enter the kingdom of God, but Jesus assured them if they believe, the impossible will happen and the camel (believer) will enter heaven.
The disciples were in the dark and they did not have the Holy Spirit inside of them to teach them. The disciples saw everything as through a dark glass (1 Cor. 13:12), like seeing things on a misty morning. After Christ’s resurrection, we read in the Gospel of Luke: And their eyes were opened (24:31). Not that their eyes were shut or blind, but the scales were

removed, and whatever hindered their sight and knowledge was taken away.
The Apostle Peter asked Jesus what their reward would be since they left everything. The corresponding passage to Mark 10 is Matthew 19 and something more is written, not found in the Book of Mark.
And Jesus said to them (disciples), ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ (Matt. 19:28)
Our Lord says all the believers who followed Him will sit with Him on the throne. How can we follow Christ? We did follow Him in His death and resurrection. It happened to all of us once we accepted Him. The world and every living person who lived on earth died when Jesus died, but when Christ resurrected from the dead, ONLY the true believers did resurrect with Him. If we don’t accept Him, we will never taste life.
The first to be reborn is the resurrected Christ and the Church did follow Him. Thus, we are reckoned as the real firstborn, the first to belong to a total new creation. When the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne in the world to come, the Church will accompany Him sitting on the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. That will happen during the Millennium when our Lord will literally rule the world. The throne of David will be ruled from Jerusalem. It is not happening today as the Apostle Paul says there is a prerequisite. Once our corruptible is exchanged for an incorruptible body, then we will rule with Christ, clothed in a glorious body like His.
For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written (1 Cor. 15:53, 54). Notice this passage speaks of the ‘Son of Man’ and not the ‘Son of God.’ There is a difference as the Son of Man will rule the earth. During the Millennium, He will reign on the throne of David. Whenever in the Bible our Lord is mentioned as the ‘Son of God,’ it portrays Him as sitting on the throne of God in heaven. The Church will rule the heavens with Christ, but also with Christ during the Millennium. We are the real firstborn to rule both heaven and earth.
‘When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.’ (Matt. 25:31)
The angels are His messengers and they are the Church. The world will recognise us, not sure what happened to us with the rapture of the Church. It will shake them to the core.
When Christ returns, His 12 disciples will accompany Him as part of the Church. His apostles were known as saints, as Saint John, Peter and James. We too are known as saints. ‘Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.’ (Phil. 4:21) Revelations 1:6; 5:10 says we are a nation of kings and priests. The 12 thrones and disciples are mentioned as the Church is meant to rule. Today we are taught things as little children absorbing everything in faith, but once we are in heaven, our real mission will surface.
The number 12 is a common number in the book of Revelation. The Church will be spared from all the horrors of the great tribulation, but once

the Church is in heaven, a new body of believers will develop on earth. From amongst them the 144,000 evangelists will disperse the Gospel throughout the world, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. The New Jerusalem, the city of Heaven, is described as having walls 144 cubits thick, symbolic of the 12 tribes and the 12 Apostles. The foundations of the walls are structured on 12 precious stones. The city is foursquare, with walls 12,000 stadia long, wide, and high. There are 3 gates on each side, thus 12 in total. Inside, the Tree of Life yields 12 different kinds of fruits. The Book of Revelation pictures the 24 elders (5:4) and they are the Church. We as the Church are the firstborn and have a double portion, thus 12 x 2. Our Lord was speaking to the 12 disciples as part of a group. Obviously, Jesus did not take into account Judas who betrayed Him, being replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:18-26).

The Apostle Peter represents the believing remnant from the Jewish nations. He (Jewish nations) denied Jesus like the Apostle Peter who denied Jesus three times, but a remnant of them did repent on the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to them boldly. Peter left behind his 'riches'—the Jewish faith—to absorb the simple message of Christ like a child. Judas portrays the Jewish nation who refused the resurrected Christ. 'Everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, will receive one hundred times, and will inherit eternal life. '

This sounds dramatic. Christians find the most difficult part of being a missionary is to leave behind their families and friends with endless goodbyes. We all desire stability, unconditional love, acceptance and a sense of belonging to some family or friends.

Maybe the real question we need to ask is, where do we get our sense of identity and security from? Are we willing to take up our cross and follow Jesus? He is teaching us to depend on Him alone as our source of security. He proves to be a more faithful friend and brother than any other person on earth. Our commitment may last a lifetime or a few years of separation.

If you think God is calling you to the mission field, remember you will suffer many persecutions, lacking all the commodities you enjoyed. It may strain your marriage. At best, be prepared to be single to absorb the hardships alone, until you know what to expect. I believe when the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he mainly targeted the missionaries who left everything to spread the Gospel. 'Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time.' (1 Cor. 7:5) It is like saying good-bye to your beloved wife for a few years. It was not a divorce as our world senses it. Apostle Peter's wife accompanied him, but once you enter the 'unknown,' it's better not to be tied with too many earthly responsibilities. Once we are acquainted with the 'unknown', then things will change. Paul says don't we have the right to take our wives along with us like the other apostles, the Lord's brothers, and Cephas (Peter) do? (1 Cor. 9:5)

Whatever we sacrifice, we will be rewarded handsomely—one hundredfold, not today but in the world to come. Our Lord mentioned the hundredfold in His first parable in Matthew 13. It concerns a sower who

sowed the seed wherever he went. The Word of God (seed) did reach the multitudes, and a few of them did take root ending in a great harvest, even though most of the seed shrivelled up falling by the wayside, on the rocks and in between the weeds. The good is that some seed did fall on fertile soil, to allow the Word of God to take root in their life. The seed will germinate once it dies, to symbolise Christ's death and resurrection. Some seed yielded much fruit and the final harvest was 100-fold, 60-fold and 30-fold. The Church, who are the first fruit of the new creation, yielded the 100-fold fruit. The Jews, who will repent on the 'Day of the Lord', will yield the 60-fold fruit. Lastly, the remaining nations of the world who do accept Christ will yield the 30-fold fruit. Our desire is to have a full reward. Mark 10:30 warns us if we do sacrifice all our commodities for the sake of the Gospel, then we will be ill-treated. The end result is that the fruit of our harvest will be cherished in a lasting new creation, once we are in heaven, and not before.

'But Many of the First Shall Be Last; and of the Last First'

Our Lord says expect a 'reversal of events' after His resurrection from the dead. The people we deem to be blessed will be replaced by a 'people' who are not blessed. It can be phrased simpler by saying the Jewish nations who deemed they were chosen will be exchanged by the 10 lost tribes of Israel who vanished 700 years earlier in the Assyrian captivity. Again, we are going to stir the subject of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. We need to appreciate the differences God allowed to be made between the house of Israel and the house of Judah. If we fail to notice their differences in the Bible, many chapters will be sealed for us. There is a clear thread in the Bible and we can trace it in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, and the burning question throughout Genesis is: Who is the firstborn? I warn you many parables in the Bible are the difficult chapters, to draw a line between the people who do believe in Him and those who reject Him. Many people today speak of 'Abraham, the Jew,' and often even Isaac and Jacob are called Jews. They have no idea who the Jews and Israel are. The Jews are only mentioned until about 1500 years after Abraham, and 600 years after the death of Moses.

Since Israel was deported into the Assyrian captivity, Judah is mentioned 220 times in the Books of Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, and Israel, Jacob or Ephraim is mentioned more than 500 times. There are more than 2000 references to Israel in the Bible having no references whatever to the Jews. On the other hand, there are more than 500 citations to Judah that have no reference to Israel. We have no authority to change the name of Israel to Judah, or think that Israel are the Jews. It is absurd to think that all the British people are Scottish. Most of the false doctrines concerning Israel is the common belief that God's prophecies concerning the lost tribes of Israel are not going to happen. Indirectly, they try to prove God is not trustworthy, promising things He cannot fulfil. Some will argue their way out of this, asserting the Church substituted Israel, the promises God made to all the tribes of Israel; thus they vanished in thin air. They believe the Jewish nation did not obey God's laws permitting Jesus to be crucified, and they too forfeited their place of privilege.

In the Bible (KJV) we regularly find the words ‘it shall come to pass.’ It is found more than 200 times. In the week leading to Moses' death, he stated 13 times in the Book of Deuteronomy ‘it shall come to pass.’ A often-quoted verse is: ‘And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee.’ (Deut. 30:1) Israel will be persecuted severely but in the something good will develop, and it’s happening today. Every promise will be fulfilled.

In the final hours before Jesus died, many things must have screamed through His mind, and the worst was to be rejected by His own people. Pause for a moment and think what He could have meant by the saying ‘the first shall be last and the last shall be first.’ The words relate to the split God caused after King Solomon.

For a reason, God divided the house of Israel in two. If ‘one’ of the houses did forsake Him, He will go to the other house. After the reign of King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel did split in two. The ten northern tribes rebelled against Solomon’s son who was from the tribe of Judah. The Jewish nations (Judah and Benjamin) remained loyal to Rehoboam (son of Solomon) who reigned in Jerusalem. The split of the kingdom of Israel occurred when Rehoboam told Israel he will make their burdens heavier, rather than lighter, than his father Solomon (1 Kings 12:14). The northern tribes of Israel were provoked by his harsh words (1 Kings 12:15). Near the end of Solomon’s reign, a prophet prophesied saying (1 Kings 11:31) God will rend the kingdom and will give ten tribes to thee (Jeroboam) because King Solomon forsook Him. Once the split occurred, it was maintained and deepened by the wicked actions of Jeroboam. The southern tribes were Judah and Benjamin. Ephraim was the largest of the 10 lost tribes in the north, and sometimes God refers to the northern kingdom as ‘Ephraim,’ as Ephraim had the firstborn right. The two split kingdoms never reunited, and occasionally even warred against one another. They will not unite until Christ returns on the Mount of Olives.

The Assyrian army invaded the northern kingdom and took the ten tribes captive (2 Kings 17:6). Some people may query why the Assyrians did not conquer the southern kingdom (Jewish nations) at the same time. Of course, it was not God’s plan at that time, proving He has different plans for both the houses of Israel. It is like walking on 2 legs. If the one leg troubles you, you hop on the other. The one leg (Jewish nation) did reject the risen Christ. Since then, the weight of God’s promises is placed on the ‘other leg’ or the 10 lost tribes of Israel, Ephraim or the lost sheep, and they do absorb the much-talked-about firstborn rights, the greatest of all God’s promises.

Many of the prophecies God made concerning the 10 lost tribes of Israel were made long after their exile, and some were even made after Christ resurrected from the dead. God made it very plain that He will fulfil all the prophecies He made, and none will be left on the wayside. One can either believe God or reject His promises. Either way, He will make it happen.

Some say that the ten northern tribes of Israel are lost and their whereabouts are unknown. It’s not true. Their whereabouts are known to

God. You and I may be ignorant, but God in Heaven knows them and even the hairs on their head. Nearly 800 years after the northern tribes had been taken away into the Assyrian captivity, God specifically names the northern and the southern tribes. During the great tribulation, they will amalgamate (Rev. 7:4-8). When the Apostle James wrote his letter to the Church, his opening words were: ‘To the 12 tribes of Israel. ’

There are so many false teachings about the tribes of Israel and they all have one thing in common. They all try to remove the true nation of Israel from their place of privilege and replace them with Gentiles. It is known as the ‘replacement theology.’ Most of them argue that God stopped dealing with Israel as a unique nation. Thus, many replacement theologians feel that they have to discredit Revelation chapter 7 and other similar prophecies, maintaining that the specific listing of the tribes of Israel should not be taken too literally. They maintain they are the ‘spiritual Israel’, but they are not spiritual at all. There is nothing ‘spiritual’ about not believing what God has said.

Ever since the two kingdoms of Israel split, they were poles apart. They went into different captivities, at different times and by different nations. Israel disappeared in the Assyrian captivity 721 B. C. while 133 years later, Judah was carried into the Babylonian captivity 588–606 B. C. A part of Judah returned after 70 years, as God predicted, but Israel never returned, nor was there any likelihood that they would return until the final, glorious restoration when Christ returns to commence the Millennium. Countless prophecies were made after the division of the tribes into two nations; and all the prophecies relate to either our dispensation of grace or to the restoration of David’s throne on earth. When Jesus told the Jews He will go where they could not find Him, even though they will seek Him, the Jews knew that He was addressing the lost tribes of Israel, the part of Israel that were scattered in the dispersion. They inquired: ‘Will He go to the dispersed among the Gentiles?’ (John 7:35) This passage confirms that the Jews knew that the 10 lost tribes of Israel were scattered amongst the Gentile nations, and Jesus annoyed them immensely.

God divided the Abrahamic promises among Jacob’s twelve sons, and when He said through Jacob that Ephraim’s ‘seed shall become a multitude of nations,’ He was not speaking of the Jews. The Jewish nation will never be ‘a multitude of nations.’ God was speaking to His firstborn, namely Ephraim (Gen. 35:11). Ephraim is God’s firstborn (Jer. 31:9) and Jacob verified this when he spoke to Ephraim: ‘his seed shall become a multitude of nations’ (Gen. 48:19). Just the opposite is said of Judah—‘He shall become a remnant.’ The subject of this great promise is Israel and not Judah. Judah has never been a multitude of nations, and never will. When Hosea said that Israel shall be ‘as the sand of the sea’ he meant they cannot be measured nor numbered (Hosea 1:10). The following verse says: ‘Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.’ (v. 11) Clearly, it is in the making awaiting fulfilment, after the Day of the Lord

We discover the divide of the two houses of Israel hundreds of times in the Old and in the New Testament. In all of Jesus' parables, His messages and dealings with the people, He alerts the crowds of this great divide.

• ‘She [Martha] had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and she listened to His words. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me. And Jesus answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken from her.’ (Luke 10:39-42) What did Mary have that Martha needed? What was the ‘good part?’ Mary chose the good and it will be part of her forever. Jesus meant to say that Mary chose to listen to Jesus above the preparation of a meal. This may sound strange to some women like Martha, thinking preparing a meal is more important than visiting. The most pressing need in Martha’s eyes was to prepare a meal for Jesus and His disciples. Mary weighed the situation differently. She chose to listen to the wisdom of Jesus, her Saviour, while she had the opportunity. Mary portrays the 10 lost tribes of Israel who did heed the Words of Christ, unlike Martha who portrays the Jewish nations.

• The history of the woman with the bleeding disorder (Mark 5:22-43) is tied to the history of Jairus. While the daughter of Jairus was alive, there was another woman who had a bleeding disorder for 12 years; she was infertile and known as a heathen. When the ill woman touched the hem of our Lord’s garment, the daughter of Jairus died. It was clearly at the expense of the woman who had a bleeding disorder. As soon as the real message of Christ is proclaimed, the 10 lost tribes of Israel or the woman with the bleeding disorder will be healed and she will have many children, but the Jews who refuse the simple message of the Gospel will die as the daughter of Jairus, having no children. ‘Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from (Jairus' daughter) you and it shall be given to a people who will produce fruit.’ (Matt. 21:43)

• In the history of the prodigal son, the son who spilled his fortune was glad to eat the pods that were meant for the pigs he herded (Luke 15:16). This parable etches both the tribes of Ephraim (10) and Judah (2). The one son who left his father wasted his inheritance to portray Ephraim, and the other son who remained faithfully with his father portrays Judah. The prodigal son lost everything and he squandered much of his time attending to the pigs. When he decided to return to his father, his father whole-heartedly accepted him. The other son felt embittered. The prodigal son was dressed with the finest robe and he even killed the calf that was fattened in the pen. His father was cheerful knowing that his son who was deemed as dead is now alive. He was lost, but now he is found (Luke 15). The other son who remained with his father is Judah, and he was steeped in the laws of Moses, and in the end he snubbed his brother. He sulked and refused to enjoy the banquet his father prepared for his lost brother. With the repentance of the prodigal son, he was blessed with the blessings of the new covenant and thus the mentioning of the words as joy, the finest robe, and ‘he was dead and now he is alive.’ Ephraim did return and we are at the banquet. Jeremiah 31 was written long after the 10 lost

tribes of Israel disappeared into the Assyrian captivity. When the prodigal son tended the pigs, he must have read Jeremiah 31:18: ‘I have certainly heard Ephraim mourn and say, "You disciplined me, and I was disciplined. I was like a young, untrained calf. Turn me, and I will be turned, because you are the Lord my God. "’

• Ishmael was born after the flesh and his life embodies the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai, seeking the righteousness of the law (Gal. 4:28-31). He (Jewish nations) were religious and deemed righteous but outside of Christ. Ishmael’s corrupt nature was his reigning principle in life. Isaac his brother depicts the true believers or the 10 lost tribes of Israel, who are entrusted with the firstborn right. Isaac merely believed the simple promises God made to Abraham.

• Similarly, we can draw a line between Abraham and Lot, Jacob and Esau, Reuben and Ephraim.

• Judah had a big skeleton in his closet. Genesis 38 is an interruption in the Book of Genesis, but a very significant one. In chapter 37, our attention is focused on Joseph, who was brutally sold into slavery, making Jacob think he was killed by a beast. Chapter 39 is also centred on the history of Joseph, when he was in the house of Potiphar, Pharaoh’s officer. Chapter 38 is wedged in the history of Joseph, and it’s so different to the history of Joseph. It is a long chapter and the closing paragraph of the chapter sketches the birth of the twins that resulted from a slyly planned union between Judah and Tamar. Judah was totally oblivious of the affair he had, but finally he had to admit he was in the wrong and he proved to be the father of the twins. Traditionally, the first twin to be born had the rights of the firstborn, thus some kind of identifying mark had to be placed on the first baby coming from the womb. When one of the two unborn foetuses thrust out his hand, a scarlet thread was tied about it, assuming he will be the first to be born. The hand withdrew, allowing the birth of the other child. Thus, the firstborn was the other boy. This firstborn was named Perez, while the next son, the one with the scarlet thread wrapped around his wrist, was named Zerah. The later genealogies in the Bible do prove that his firstborn son, Perez, was indeed the heir of Judah, leading to the messianic line until the time of David, and ultimately, of Jesus. He portrays the Jewish nations and Perez the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

• Long before the division took place, Moses, while prophesying unto the seed of Jacob, cried out: ‘Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah and bring him unto his people’ (Deut. 33:7). It proves that Judah was to be separated from his people, to be finally united with Israel. It is NOT Israel returning to Judah, no it is Judah returning to Israel. The Scriptures assure us it will happen until at the end of ‘the last days. ’

• The topic of Ezekiel 37 are the 2 pieces of wood, representing both Judah and Ephraim. The 2 sticks will unite to be one. Once it happens, then Israel and Judah will be ‘one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, they are to have one King and be no more two nations’ (Eze. 37:22). It never happened in the past and Judah never had a king ever since they went into the Babylonian captivity. The book of Ezra mentions that the two tribes returned, but none of the ten lost tribes. Similarly, in

the book of Nehemiah it says that only Judah and Benjamin returned and no other tribe is mentioned.
The Major Prophets agree that once Israel and Judah are reunited, their descendants will be in perpetual occupation of the land. We know it never happened because the Jews were suddenly driven out in the Egyptian captivity (70 A. D.) and have been nomads ever since. It proves that the 10 lost tribes of Israel did not return with the Jews from Babylon.
For a reason, Paul spoke of the lost tribes of Israel saying in time past they were without Christ, considered aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise. They had no hope and they were without God since their Assyrian captivity (Eph. 2:14). They were barred from the citizenship of Israel and the 2 tribes of Israel were faithful, but it changed with Christ's resurrection from the dead. In one way or the other, either Ephraim or Judah will survive—if the one falls from the boat, the other will steer the boat. Finally, they will unite as the two woods.
The potter's clay needs to draw our attention to God, and in the Book of Jeremiah, the potter represents God who moulded a vessel (Jer. 18:4-6). A potter made a vessel of clay but it was spoiled in the potter's hand, so he remoulded it into another vessel; he did what seemed good to him. The one lump got spoiled, and they are the unbelieving Jewish nations obeying the law (Rom. 9:21). That same lump got remoulded, and it became a masterwork, signifying the blessing God will bestow on the Church or the 10 lost tribes of Israel, at the expense of the Jewish nations, who lost the greatest of all God's blessings.
There's a strange history in Ezekiel 23 regarding two sisters, Aholah and Aholibah. It is a story that is seldom told and it's a shame, since it sheds so much light upon God's dealing in His marriage with Israel. Aholah and Aholibah were sisters, and both of whom were married to God, but the marriage spelled trouble ever since it began. The older sister, Aholah, played the harlot (23:5-8). So God delivered her into the hands of her Assyrian lovers and finally she (10 lost tribes) disappeared in the Assyrian captivity. God's other wife, Aholibah, was even more corrupt in her fornication, more than her older sister. This chapter ends with the gruesome acts of Aholibah (Jewish nation). God deals differently with the two houses of Israel.
God told Hosea to do a strange thing saying he had to marry Gomer. God warned him saying she is going to be unfaithful to you; in fact, she will be known as a street prostitute. The first boy was named Jezreel meaning 'cast-away' a shame to Israel. A daughter was born to Hosea and she was called Lo-Ruchamah, which means 'not pitied.' The third was a little boy and he called him Lo-ammi, 'not my people.' Both children symbolise the ten tribes of Israel as distinct from Judah. Romans 9:25 quotes Hosea 2:23 saying one day He will call them 'My people' who are not My people (Lo-ammi) ; and I will call her 'My loved one' who is not My loved one. The 10 tribes of Israel were called Ammi, but they became Lo-ammi, and things changed since Christ resurrected from the dead. Today the Church is mostly comprised of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, and they are known as God's people or Ammi. According to Hosea 1:10, 11 in the last days, the house of Israel will become as the sands of the sea for number, before

their reunion with the House of Judah. The heathen people is not the subject of the Book of Hosea but Israel is. Hosea is the first of the Minor Prophets. We noticed in the Books of Romans 9 & 11 that the salvation went from the Jewish nation and it is given to Lo-ammi or the 10 lost tribes. When the Apostle Paul says the blessings are taken from the Jewish nation and given to the heathen, then we need to ask which heathen nation the Apostle Paul is talking about?

Romans 9 to 11 is rather famous for many controversial issues. However, Paul is trying to address an apparent contradiction that the Jews who are deemed to be the chosen people of God failed to respond to God's message. On the other hand, the Gentiles or the 10 lost tribes who were alienated from the promises of God, and today are known as 'not His chosen people,' received the Gospel. Does it imply a failure of God's plan or His change of mind? Can we trust such a God? God's Word can never fail and He promised eternal blessings to Israel. This passage did become a 'battle zone' for many Christians. Romans 9 to 11 quotes more than 31 Old Testament verses. We need to study each of them to conclude with Paul's final message. It's simple—the blessings are taken from the Jewish nation and it's entrusted to the 10 lost tribes of Israel. But many who are first (Jewish nation) will be last, and the last (10 lost tribes of Israel) first. What is the meaning of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard? The owner of this particular vineyard went to the marketplace very early in the morning to find workers for the day. His offered wage was reckoned as generous. The workers in the first group were more than happy to work for that generous wage. As the day progressed, he hired more workers until four groups of workers were hired, the last group of workers only worked for 1 hour before the day ended. When the time came for the wages to be paid, the first group of workers saw the last group being paid the same wage. Naturally speaking, the first group of workers will be paid more since they worked the longest. The first group of workers in the vineyard resented receiving the same wage as the last group. Their attitude was similar to the Pharisees, who were enraged by Jesus' teaching that others could inherit a heavenly kingdom they thought were only reserved for them. They despised the idea that Jesus is offering the kingdom to the poor and oppressed, for the Pharisees to be made equal to them. The rest of the workers (10 lost tribes of Israel) received their wages without complaint, but the others were envious of them. The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) whose life of service was limited to a moment of his repentance and confession of his faith in Christ received the same reward of eternal life as His disciples.

'When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptised with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptised by him.' (Luke 7:29-30) The root of all sin is our arrogance to judge our Creator, to think we know better than Him. It is to steer our own lives to deny whatever God told us. True faith is to believe every word our Lord spoke, to please Him in everything we do. If we question the fundamental truths about God—then we are walking on thin ice. The world deems God unrighteous—blaming Him for all the wrongs. We can testify

that God is righteous and He keeps His word. In this passage, the people who were baptised by John the Baptist acknowledged that God was righteous. They agreed upon the simplicity of God's wisdom, allowing themselves to be baptised, unlike the Pharisees and lawyers who refused the baptism of John. The word justify has a primary meaning in the New Testament, declaring someone as righteous. Most often it refers to God affirming the believers in Christ to be righteous. When we speak of justification by faith alone, we agree that God declares us righteous by simply believing in Christ, apart from any works of the law. However, here we find a reversal. It is not God who declares us righteous, but simple men who declare God to be righteous! The men who justify God are tax collectors, considered as the worst sinners in all Israel. The common people justified God, accepting the ways of God, and they did not try to constrain Him or mould Him as they deemed best for them. The common people were baptised with the baptism of John, a baptism that was with a view to repentance, which pointed to the finished work of Jesus. With our baptism, we descended into the waters (death) and rose from the waters to signify our union with the resurrected Christ. The common people approved the message of God by submitting to the ordinance He decreed upon us. It is a decision we make as an adult or child, but not as newborns. Touching infant baptism, I need to mention that faith precedes baptism, something infants are not born with. It is no substitute for circumcision. When the early believers debated Acts 15 whether circumcision is still required for believers as part of becoming a Christian, baptism was not spoken of. Nothing is debated about baptism, thinking it replaced circumcision. The Pharisees did not follow the ordinance of God and did not baptise themselves, and were comfortable with the 'circumcision', but the common people and the tax collectors did follow the ordinances of God and they portray the lost tribes of Israel, who were baptised. The unfaithful are more prone to accept Christ and they are the tax collectors and adulterers.

'There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.' Luke 13:28–30

Clearly, the message of our Lord is that the Pharisees or the Jewish nation will be outside, bemoaning the fact that the people who came from the west, east, south and north (10 lost tribes of Israel) did enter the kingdom of God, but they forfeited their chances.

'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles

himself will be exalted.’ Luke 18:10–14The man who humbled himself is like the prodigal son who realised all the bad he did, but he repented and returned to his father. The Pharisee boasted in the law, exposing the weaknesses of the Jewish people, who trust themselves. The prodigal son, the tax collectors and the detestable people did repent, receiving forgiveness. It is the ‘lost sheep’ opposing the righteous Pharisees. Something else is striking.
We noted that the names Judah, Israel, Jacob and Ephraim are frequently mentioned together in many verses of the Bible. As an example, in the Book of Jeremiah alone, Judah is mentioned 36 times with the name Israel.
• The general rule is if Israel is cited before Judah, then it transmits the truths concerning our dispensation of grace. I will give a few examples. And the LORD said unto me, the backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. 3:11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. 33:14 In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. 50:4
• If Judah is named before Israel, Jacob or Ephraim, then it touches the prophecies our Lord made concerning His future reign on earth, known as the Millennium. Let me explain this with the following verses in the Book of Jeremiah. ‘In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.’ 3:18 ‘In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness.’ 23:6 ‘And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first.’ 33:7
Today, God’s promises rest more heavily on the leg of Israel (Ephraim or Jacob) than on the leg of Judah. If either of His legs are rejected, then He will favour the other. The Book of Genesis has many dramatic events and many debates pivot on who the real firstborn are. Today the scale favours the 10 lost tribes of Israel, the lost sheep who heeded the voice of the Shepherd. The first will be last, but after the rapture of the Church, Judah will accept Christ sooner than the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

Mark 10:32–45
And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed, and they followed him with fear. Then, taking the twelve aside again, he began to tell them what things would happen unto him, 33 saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the princes of the priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, 34 and they shall mock him and shall scourge him and shall spit upon him and shall kill him; but the third day he shall rise again. 35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him, saying, Master, we

would that thou should do for us whatever we shall ask. 36 And he said unto them, what would ye that I should do for you? 37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one at thy right hand and the other at thy left hand in thy glory. 38 Then Jesus said unto them, ye know not what ye ask; can ye drink the cup that I drink? Or be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with? 39 And they said unto him, we can. And Jesus said unto them, ye shall indeed drink the cup that I drink, and of the baptism that I am baptised with ye shall be baptised; 40 but to sit at my right hand and at my left hand is not mine to give, but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared. 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be angry against James and John. 42 But Jesus, calling unto them, said unto them, ye know that those who are seen to be princes among the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those that are great among them wield power over them. 43 But it shall not be like this among you, for whosoever desires to make himself great among you shall be your servant; 44 and whosoever of you that desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to serve and to give his life in ransom for many.

It was a time of year when the people were travelling in pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as the Passover was only a few days away; and many Jewish people from around the world were making the same journey to Jerusalem. The disciples were amazed, not knowing what to expect, when they followed Jesus going to Jerusalem. He walked ahead of them with no hesitancy.

As they followed Him, they were afraid. Perhaps they were watching their Master carefully; and they couldn't help noticing His determination. Something gave them the chills, knowing something weird was happening. Jesus warned them about this journey long before, and about what would happen to Him and them at the end. The disciples' dreams of glory were shattered. Luke 18:34 Their dreams of Jesus were shattered, thinking He was going up to Jerusalem to be crowned as the mighty, conquering King of David. They expected a victorious Messiah, who would toss all the foreign oppressors from the land of Israel, to restore the glorious kingdom their forefathers talked about. Acts 1:6 What they didn't grasp was that the Saviour’s pathway to greatness didn't follow the pattern of the world today. They didn't know that ‘greatness’ in His kingdom led first through the path of suffering and death. They didn't understand the pathway to greatness is via the path of suffering and death. The disciples had their eyes on ‘greatness’. They hoped to be ‘the great’ with Him in His reign, and there was no sin in this. ‘Greatness’ in Jesus' kingdom is a good thing. There can be no higher or more worthy ambition than to be truly ‘great’ in Jesus' kingdom. He never condemned anyone for seeking it. They were not like Esau who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, not caring about his eternal position, as his mind was only focused on here and now. Jesus loved them more than that; He loved them enough to foremostly teach them that their eternal healing has pre-eminence to the cares and needs of our present life. The ‘temporary’ was not as important as the ‘eternal’.

The road to greatness in Christ's kingdom is via His death and resurrection.
In Matthew 20:17–19, we read: Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge Him to be crucified. On the third day He will rise again.’
It is very detailed and everything He said is fulfilled:
He was betrayed, 26:47–50
and was given over into the hands of the chief priests and scribes, 26:57
He was condemned by them to death, 26:66
He was handed over to the Gentiles, 27:1–2
He was mocked, 27:27–31
scourged, 27:26
and crucified. 27:32–50
After three days, He was gloriously raised from the dead. 28:1–10
Firstly, we need to notice that Jesus refers to Himself as ‘The Son of Man’. That Name would have drawn the disciples’ attention to Daniel. ‘I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.’ Dan. 7:13–14
Jesus didn’t say He was going to be betrayed, but rather, ‘the Son of Man is going to be betrayed.’ He would be humiliated to become the promised Messiah. It would have been natural for Him to avoid going to Jerusalem, but He went willingly to ultimately die on the cross—not for Himself, as Daniel says; but for us.
It literally says that Jesus took the disciples aside ‘privately’ away from the crowd that followed Him. He wanted the disciples to know well in advance what He was about to do. Their personal message was not meant for the crowd and He didn't want anyone or anything to interfere with the sacrifice He was about to offer to God.
At that moment the mother of Zebedee’s two sons came to Jesus kneeling down with a request. Jesus said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right hand and the other on the left, in your kingdom. ’
Matt. 20:20 The passage corresponds to Mark 10. The mother of Zebedee was Salome, and it’s easy to figure it out once we compare Matthew 27:56 with Mark 15:40. Her two sons John and James were nicknamed ‘Boanerges’ Mark 3:16–17 or the sons of thunder. On one occasion, when the people in the village of Samaria evaded the message of Jesus, it was James and John who wanted to call down fire from heaven to devour them. Luke 9:54I believe Salome’s final wishes to Jesus were answered, as James was the first apostle to be martyred, and John was the author of the Gospel of John, the Epistles of John and the Book of Revelation.

Salome was the wife of Zebedee, the prosperous fisherman who hired servants. The only glimpse we have of him is at his boat, when he was mending his nets. Then Jesus met him and asked his two sons to follow Him. Zebedee and his wife Salome had a mutual devotion to Jesus. Zebedee did not resist his sons leaving their fishing trade to accompany Jesus. Salome knew she was honoured as her two sons were two of Christ’s best-loved disciples and along with Peter, formed the inner circle among the twelve. She requested that her sons be placed one on Christ’s right hand and the other on His left when He inaugurated His kingdom. Our Lord had to teach Salome and His disciples that the means to be seated close to Him on His throne is to share in His sufferings. Our Lord did not treat Salome’s ambition as if it were sinful, but He was considerate.

There is another twist. Even the apostle John mentioned Salome in his Gospel, and he didn't refer to her as his mother. Instead, she may be the woman that he referred to simply as the Lord's ‘mother's sister,’ John 19:25 which would mean that she was our Lord's relative through Mary. Thus James and John were also related to our Lord through her. This might explain why Jesus was able to turn to John as He hung on the cross, point Mary to John, in her great moment of need, and say, ‘Behold your mother! From that day, John took her into his own home and cared for her. John 19:27 Mary was his relative.

Salome had a great faith in Jesus, and clearly she was devoted to Him. She was among the women who followed Jesus from Galilee Luke 23:55 and served Him in His earthly ministry.

She was one of the women who persisted, who carefully watched Jesus' crucifixion, to find the place where He was buried, Matt. 27:55–56 and she was also among the women who went early to His tomb, on the day of His resurrection. Mark 16:1–8 As any proud mother, she was eager for James and John to be appointed to places of honour in His kingdom. After all, it would have been a family matter. I don't think we should be too quick to blame her for this. When we think of this dear woman coming to Jesus and asking Him to give her sons what amounts to the utmost promotion in all of creation. The other 10 disciples were angered, shaking their heads in embarrassment, telling Salome to keep her wishes to herself. James and John were not embarrassed as on the quiet, they were responsible for the request in the first place. They thought they'd have a better chance at getting a positive answer if they put the request in the mouth of their mother, or Jesus' mother’s sister! Now; this isn't the first time that the question of ‘first place’ in Jesus' kingdom is mentioned. Previously in Mark 9:33–37, they debated who of the disciples were the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus points to the sacrifice He was about to make as the ‘cup’ He was about to ‘drink’. That is known as a figure of speech to denote the ‘portion’ or ‘an experience’ He had to accept coming from the hand of God. In the garden, He prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will,’ Matt. 26:39 and when Peter sought to rescue Him, He told him, ‘Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?’ John

18:11 John and James were quick to respond saying they, too, wanted to drink the cup that Jesus was about to drink, but they had no idea what the ‘cup’ was. Our Lord assured them they too would drink from His cup of suffering. James was the first of the twelve disciples to die as a martyr for the Lord. Acts 12:1–2 And though we don't have record of John, we do know he too experienced tribulation for his faith throughout his lifetime, and he lived his final years in exile. Rev. 1:9 Jesus made it clear He did not decide who would be in the places of honour, who would be seated at His right and at His left; but that decision is made by His Father. Once our Lord did resurrect from the dead, then all power is given to Him, and He will decide.
Jesus sensed the other 10 disciples were annoyed with John and James, and He called them apart.
But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’ Matt. 20:28
Notice that the modus operandi of Christ's kingdom is different to the hierarchy of this world, to decide who are the great. Jesus speaks of the unbelieving people as ‘Gentiles’—that is, people who are outside of a covenant relationship, the covenant God has with Israel. He says that the world operates in a particular pecking-order. Rulers lord it over unbelievers; and the ‘great’ exercise authority over the rulers. It's a ‘top-to-bottom’ chain of command; and the only way to climb to the top of the ladder is to drag down the fellow above you.
This is so natural and normal in everyday life that we hardly even think about it. And yet, Jesus shocks us by saying ‘Yet it shall not be so among you.’ As His followers, we are not to arrange ourselves in a ‘top-to-bottom’ pecking order. As His followers, the ‘great ones’ are not ‘great’ because they're the ones on top. In His kingdom, ‘greatness’ is not measured by how many people are serving you!
He says, ‘whosoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.’
When I think of this, I think of the occasion, when Jesus on the night that He was betrayed, took a towel and began to wash His disciples’ feet. John 13:1–5 Jesus’ attitude of servanthood is so unlike His disciples, who argued among themselves as to which of them was the greatest. Since there was no servant present to wash their feet, it would never have occurred to them to wash each other’s feet. When the Lord Himself stooped to this lowly task, they were stunned into silence. Once He did it, He placed His garments on again, sat down, and said to His disciples; ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say

to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.’ John 13:12–17
He is our example. He used a simple example as He headed towards Jerusalem. If we want to be great, then we need to be each other's servants—‘Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’
Mark 10:45
It says that the religious leaders of Israel will deliver Jesus unto the Gentile nations, as they refused Him. Indeed it happened once Jesus was delivered unto Pilate, but the words do hide something more significant. The Apostle Paul says since the Jewish nation rejected the resurrected Christ, the nation will be cursed but the Gentile nations will be blessed. ‘Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles.’ Rom. 11:11 Once the Jewish nations rejected Christ, God intervened choosing a people (from the Gentiles) for his Name. They are the bulk of the believers today. Acts 15:14 It is to provoke the Jews to jealousy, to make them envious. Rom. 10:19; 11:14 God’s dealing with the Gentile nations during our present age has the good of the Jewish people in mind, provoking them to jealousy, to make them want the greater blessings we enjoy today in Christ. By now we know the 10 lost tribes of Israel (the lost sheep of Israel) are hinted upon when He mentions the Gentile nations.
The disciples expected Jesus to enter Jerusalem as the mighty, conquering King of David. It is similar today as many Christians think when our Lord returns, His greatest priority will be to sit on His throne at Jerusalem. No! Joel, Ezekiel and Zechariah say specifically that Israel will be invaded by many nations and Jerusalem will be levelled to the ground. However, there will be a remnant to stir a great revival amongst the Jews. Of course, Jerusalem was invaded in 70 AD but there was no remnant to stir a great revival among the Jews at that time. So, what happened in 70 A. D. ? It doesn’t comply with the prophecies of Ezekiel 38–39 or Zechariah 12. On a future date, on the Day of the Lord, then the Jewish nation will succumb to their enemies. A great army will invade Israel but a remnant from Jerusalem will repent. Once the Jewish nations call upon the Name of Jehovah, then Israel’s enemies will be God’s enemies and the tables will shift. Zech. 12:1–9 There will be a great spiritual revival amongst the Jewish people. Zechariah 12:10 and 13:1 describe nothing less than a great revival among the Jewish nation: ‘They will look on me, the One they have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son.’ Present Israel will be invaded by many enemies and the only possible means of escape is to be assimilated with Christ’s death and resurrection. The nation will literally die, but a remnant will escape.

Mark 10:46–52
And so they come to Jericho, and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. 47 And hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have

mercy on me. 48 And many told him to be silent, but he cried even more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. 49 Then Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Have confidence, rise; he calls thee. 50 He, therefore, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus, answering, said unto him, what wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, Master, that I might receive my sight. 52 And Jesus said unto him, Go; thy faith has saved thee. And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.

I have no difficulty in accepting that two blind men were healed, as written in Matthew. 20:30 It's written clearly. The reason why Mark specifically names just one of them, Bartimaeus, is maybe he was well-known in the Jericho region. The mere naming of his father indicates that he was a man of some standing in Jericho. Notice, also, the use of the definite article; 'the blind beggar' – not 'a blind beggar'. Certainly they were known in the community. The unknown companion of Bartimaeus was a less familiar figure in Jericho. Whenever in the Bible two people are named, we need to ask ourselves if anything is hidden, something particular about our dispensation of grace. I believe the 2 men reflect the truths of our dispensation. Let me explain:

- It says when Christ rose from the dead; two men stood at His graveside.
- On the day of Christ's resurrection, He appeared to the two men who left Jerusalem to go to Emmaus. Luke 24:13 Strangely only one of the two were named. The men should have waited at Jerusalem, as the 3rd day would cause the change.
- When Christ ascended into heaven on the Mount of Olives, two men stood on the place where He ascended into heaven. Possibly they were Moses and Elijah who also appeared with the Lord on the mount when He was glorified. Luke 9:30
- When two disciples of John the Baptist followed our Lord, He invited them to follow Him to see where He lived. John 1:37–39 One of the two disciples is called Andrew, and the other disciple is not named.

Bartimaeus (that is, the son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. It is common knowledge that a prefix of ‘Bar’ means ‘son of’ so why was his name repeated with ‘son of’ Bar-Timaeus? The name Bartimaeus hides the truths pertaining to our dispensation of grace. ‘Timaeus’ can be translated as ‘the honourable’, thus Bartimaeus is the son of the honourable. Notice that Bartimaeus appealed to Jesus’s inheritance, as he called upon the ‘Son of David.’ Even though he inherited the ‘honourable’ things, he desired a greater inheritance from our Lord. Jesus not only healed his blindness but also gave him a new name. When he cast away his coat, he surrendered everything he had in faith, at Jesus’ feet and then he waited to see what He gives in return. I believe not only Bartimaeus gained his sight but also he gained a new profession (following Jesus along the road) to continue the ministry of Jesus.

A valid question is why blind Bartimaeus is named the ‘son of the honourable’? Is the title not endowed to Jesus? I believe Bartimaeus does

portray the 10 lost tribes of Israel who are indeed the firstborn of Israel, known as the son of the honourable. Due to their sins they disappeared in the Assyrian captivity but they did call on the Lord as Bartimaeus in this chapter, or the lost son who fed the pigs. It's interesting to note how one son (son of Timaeus) calls for help from another son (son of David).
The crowds assumed the blind beggar (10 lost tribes of Israel) were derelict, not worth the time or the effort of Jesus. They thought Jesus would not waste His time on the outcast. The crowds could not silence the plea of Bartimaeus, and the same crowd that tried to suppress Bartimaeus is later commanded to lead him to Jesus. The crowd told Bartimaeus to 'take heart' as Jesus wanted to meet him. These same words — 'take heart' — were used earlier when Jesus called out to the frightened disciples on the sea. Mark 6:50
'What do you want me to do for you?' asks Jesus. That is the same question He asked James and John earlier. The 'sons of thunder' wanted fame and to sit with Jesus in His glory. Bartimaeus wants faith and to follow Jesus on the way. He did not ask for power, fame or glory but only for common eyesight. Jesus responds, 'Go your faith has made you well.' To be well is to be saved both physically and spiritually. The eyes of Bartimaeus (10 lost tribes of Israel) were opened, to look at Jesus Christ, the resurrected Christ.
Bartimaeus cried loudly to attract our Lord's attention, twice calling Jesus the 'Son of David.' Jeremiah wrote about the Son of David: 'Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'the Lord our righteousness.' Jer. 23:5–6
Matthew uses the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth to prove that Jesus did descend from King David and therefore He qualified to be Israel's Messiah. The promised King followed the bloodline of King David, 'your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me.' 2 Sam. 7:13–16
We need to visualise this extraordinary meeting. The 'Son of David' met the 10 lost tribes of Israel at Jericho, a place meant to be destroyed. The lost sheep are the 10 lost tribes of Israel and they are always pictured as the blind who did regain their eyesight or the prodigal son who wasted their inheritance. They did surface or revive once they did accept the risen Christ.
Bartimaeus who faced our Lord is known as the 'son of the honourable' to reflect the promises invested in the 10 lost tribes of Israel or Ephraim. The mere naming of the 'two' needs to alert us that on this occasion, we are dealing with the firstborn. There were 2 blind men, and he shouted twice naming Jesus the 'Son of David.' The Honourable is God and we have two possibilities to decide who the son of the honourable could be.
It could be 'Son of David' but on this occasion the son of the honourable is Ephraim.
Jeremiah wrote: 'With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight

path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. ’
It was written many years after the 10 lost tribes of Israel disappeared in the Assyrian captivity but the real Israel will surface as on this grand occasion. In the past the house of David did rule Israel for 33 years by King David and 40 years by King Solomon, but at Jericho there is talk of a new kingdom to rule Israel. With Christ's resurrection from the dead, He will rule all the tribes of Israel, but firstly as part of His hidden kingdom on earth and with His second coming to earth, He will physically rule all the tribes of Israel at Jerusalem.
‘I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.’ Isa. 42:16
Eight times Jeremiah contrasts the house of Israel with the house of Judah. Nearly 400 years after the tribes were divided by God into the two kingdoms, God speaks in the same breath about the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, proving that neither of the 2 houses constitutes all of the Lord’s chosen people. The whole house of Judah are not all of the Lord’s people, and the whole house of Israel are not all of the Lord’s people.
The complete house of Israel is the house of Judah and the 10 lost tribes of Israel. The Jews cannot claim Israel, ignoring the claims of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. It proves that there is a people called the whole house of Israel, who have no ties with present-day Israel. The 10 lost tribes of Israel have never been known as the Jews. The lost tribes are branded as the blind, the dumb, the tax collectors and the prostitutes who did repent, and were healed by our Lord.
In this chapter the two do oppose each other as the ‘Son of David’ was from the ‘house of Judah’ and Bartimaeus from the house of Israel. They were both known as the son of the Honourable or God. The Son of David called the blind or the ‘son’ coming from the 10 lost tribes of Israel and they did meet. Our Lord called him specifically and it portrays the repentance of the early Church in our dispensation.
‘God humbled the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali in earlier times. But in the future he will bring glory to the road by the sea, to the land across the Jordan River, to Galilee, where foreigners live. The people who walk in darkness will see a bright light. The light will shine on those who live in the land of death's shadow.’ Isa. 9:1,2
Later in the same chapter, Isaiah says: ‘The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.’ It is clear that Israel today is not complete Jacob. Jacob are the 12 tribes of Israel and they are Israel, (10 lost tribes of Israel) and the house of Judah. Surely the opening verses of Isaiah 9 prove that Zebulun and the land of Naphtali did master the sea when they travelled by way of the sea, way beyond Jordan and Galilee. They are the 'people who walked in darkness' when our Lord preached mostly to the people living at Galilee.
Many Christians today believe when Ezra and Nehemiah returned with the Jewish nation from the Babylonian captivity, the 10 lost tribes of Israel

accompanied them. It is a common misconception that the 10 tribes of Israel ‘disappeared’ when they migrated into Asia. Nothing could be further from the truth! For many centuries, ancient historians knew who the Israelites were, and where they went. They are not ‘lost. ’
Consider one such example. Flavius Josephus was a Jewish military commander, a Pharisee, and an historian of the first century A. D. He mentioned the ten tribes of Israel who were in Asia and wrote:‘. . . there are 2 tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers. ’800 years after the 10 tribes of Israel migrated to their new Asian homelands, Josephus knew that their population had become too numerous to estimate, and that the Euphrates River served as their western border. The Roman Empire could not defeat them. Ezra 4:1 records only Judah, Levi and Benjamin who returned to Palestine, but nothing of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. It refutes the fallacy that the 10 tribes returned to Israel and blended with the Jews at the time of Christ.
The 10 tribes of Israel became ‘the Scythians.’ Their capital was named ‘Sakiz,’ honouring Isaac. Who else but the lost and displaced tribes of Israel would name an Asian city to honour Isaac? Their territory was in the modern region of Armenia and Azerbaijan, between the Black and Caspian Seas. One of their first kings was named ‘Partatua.’ Ancient languages often interchanged the letters ‘p’ and ‘b.’ Try saying these letters yourself; they have very similar sounds and are called ‘labial consonants.’ When you change the first ‘p’ in the Scythian king’s name to a ‘b,’ you have ‘Bart-atua.’ The first syllable of his name ‘Bart-’ preserves the root word of ‘B-R-T,’ the Hebrew word for ‘covenant,’ or Britain. The consonants ‘B-R-T’ are a distinctive identifier of the tribes of Israel.
The Hebrew word for covenant is one of the most frequently used words in Hebrew Scriptures, appearing some 270 times. A prophecy in Hosea 1:6–10 states that although God would ‘utterly take away Israel from Palestine, He would, thereafter, make their people ‘as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.’ Flavius confirmed that the 10 tribes were innumerable and it was fulfilled by the time of Christ. God always fulfils His promises.
The miraculous healing of Bartimaeus does transmit the ‘hidden’ blessings of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, and the world is totally oblivious of them. They have the firstborn right and the greatest of ALL of God’s blessings are bestowed on them.
The 2 and the 10 tribes of Israel did split but the 2 herds of sheep will repent on the third Day of the Lord, to rule the earth at Jerusalem, on the ‘throne of David.’ Then the two sticks of Ezekiel 37 will unite to become one.
What is interesting is that blind Bartimaeus is healed at Jericho, so there is some correlation between him and Jericho. Jericho has something in common with the blind people. In this setting, our memories are aroused thinking of the once old ruined city of Jericho. It is a backdrop to the healing of Bartimaeus.
We have many similar examples when some cities evoke certain memories. Selah in the Book of Psalms is one of them. Selah is cited more

than 70 times in the Book of Psalms for a reason. Each time it is cited, our thoughts need to be tuned to the time when Christ will deliver Israel during the great tribulation at Petra or Sela in Hebrew. The Book of Revelation says the Jews need to escape Jerusalem to go to the desert, and the place in the desert is Petra. Once they repent at Sela or Petra, then God will lead them to Jerusalem. The Book of Habakkuk says God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. Hab. 3:1–3 The Hebrew language has no punctuation marks or capital letters. We can decide where the sentences start or finish. When Habakkuk 3:3 says Selah, we can correctly translate it as: The Holy One came from Mount Paran at Sela. We have the freedom to rid the verse of unnecessary punctuation marks. During the great tribulation period, we expect a mighty army coming from the south, and a mighty Shepherd will lead his sheep. He will invade Jerusalem not from the north, but from the south or from Teman to surprise the world. It will be a joyous and a momentous occasion when He will gather them as a flock of sheep. Isaiah said: ‘Who is coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is that, robed in splendour, striding forward in the greatness of his strength?’ 63:1 The name Bozrah can also be translated as ‘a fort’ or ‘a sheepfold.’ Petra is nothing other than an enormous fort or a natural fold cleaved from the mountains. The victory will commence from Teman, Paran, Sela or Bozrah in Edom, known by many names. Selah is no musical pause for the Psalmist to take a deep breath!

Similarly we need to ‘pause’ and ask why our Lord chose Jericho to heal Bartimaeus. There are certain structures in the Bible and the 10 lost tribes of Israel has nothing to do with Jericho, but they have something in common with Jericho. Jericho was ruined but somehow it was rebuilt. Similarly the 10 lost tribes of Israel disappeared in the Assyrian captivity but they managed to surface. No mention of them is made once they disappeared to the country where Abraham was born, but as the old Jericho reappeared, similarly they will reappear.

Today Jericho is a great example of what happened in the past. It borders the Dead Sea, but it is not flooded by the deep waters as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the reason is that God withheld His judgement. After Joshua levelled Jericho to the ground, He warned Israel; if any person attempts to rebuild the city, he will be cursed. This is something meaningful. Our world is cursed and God did involve Himself in the matters of our fallen earth. Via the old creation God did procure our redemption in Christ and thus our Lord endured the scorn the world directed at Him at the cross.

'Cursed before the Lord be the man that rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates.’ Josh. 6:26

The youngest son could be the firstborn, and the foundations need not be on two people. In the sacrifice of Christ, He is the Firstborn and the world did scorn His redemptive work. Today Jericho is the lowest and oldest city on earth bordering the abyss or the place of the deep. God did rebuild our fallen earth or Jericho at the cost of the Lord Jesus who died on the cross.

He did succeed and the glory He once had will be returned to Him. It proved costly and He paid the price; He was cursed for us, in turn to redeem us from this world.
‘Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree.’ Gal. 3:13
Our earth was flooded and judged long before Adam was born, but surprisingly, God recreated it in seven days, at the expense of His First-born Son.
During the reign of wicked King Ahab, (1 Kings 16:34) two sons are named on whom the foundation of Jericho is laid.
‘In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.
’The two sons were named Abiram, meaning ‘the exalted one is my father’, and Segub, meaning ‘to be set on high or to be exalted’. The two sons have a similar meaning, and strangely, it blends with the name Bartimaeus, the ‘son of the honourable’. God’s initiative to recreate a new world from our previous fallen world is despised by Satan, and he considers any possible involvement from God to redeem our fallen world as a weakness from Him. If God abandoned our fallen world to be doomed, then God’s righteousness is established. Instead, God desecrated Himself to recreate our previous fallen world. His crucial plan is to procure a remnant from our fallen earth, and the remnant is you and me, or Rahab who was saved when the walls of Jericho tumbled. Rahab pictures the remnant from our fallen world. She portrays the ten lost tribes of Israel, who worshipped other gods, and she was also known as an idolater.
The history of Elijah and Elisha is also tied to the history of Jericho. Together, they resemble the history of our Lord and the disciples who preached the simple Gospel at Pentecost. Elijah suffered many hardships and was either on the crest of a wave or dumped by the waters. Elijah resembles Moses who led the people in the wilderness, but Elisha portrays Joshua who led the nation of Israel through the Jordan River to Jericho. Elijah ascended to heaven, and Elisha proved his power by cleaving the Jordan River in two at Jericho. Joshua used the Ark of the Covenant to smite the Jordan River, but Elisha used the mantle of Elijah.
The life of Elisha seems to parallel Elijah’s life in many respects. Elisha continued as a prophet for many years in Israel and performed many miracles that equalled the miracles of Elijah. Even after Elisha’s death, a dead man was raised from the dead when his bones touched Elisha’s bones. (2 Kings 13:21) The accord between Elijah and Elisha portrays the fellowship between our Lord and the Church. Elijah embodies the suffering Lord Jesus, and Elisha the Church. The many times Jericho was destroyed to be rebuilt again illustrates how the world tried to lift itself from the condemnation of sin and suffering, experiencing one setback after the other. Whenever the world attempts to build itself, God will overthrow it, until Christ’s kingdom is settled on earth. When Elisha healed the waters of Jericho, it pictures how our Lord will heal our once-fallen earth with life-giving water. (2 Kings 2:19-22) Only Christ and the Church can cleanse the earth to escape the many curses of Jericho.

Our Lord had a clear purpose to visit Jericho: to commence His journey to Jerusalem, to be the world's greatest Mediator and High Priest. He proved to be the 'author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' (Heb. 5:8-10) Today, the Church borders Jericho, as we too dwell on earth as 'strangers and pilgrims.' (John 17:15) Our time of glory will come. Elisha spent three days at Jericho after Elijah was taken to heaven, before Elisha healed the waters of Jericho. The Jordan River is located east of Jericho, and translated in Hebrew, it means 'to descend'. It is the curse of death, and because of this symbolism, our Lord Jesus had to be immersed in the River Jordan. Similarly, Elijah had to descend to the bottom of the Jordan River. When Elijah smote the Jordan with his mantle, it pictured our Lord's death at Calvary, and His baptism at the River Jordan commenced His ministry on earth. (Matt. 3:13-17) We too need to 'descend' into the Jordan River, to present our bodies as a 'living sacrifice', immersed into Jesus' death. (Rom. 12:1; 6:3-4) Once we accompany Him to the River Jordan, sharing His humiliation, then we are reckoned as worthy to finally rebuild Jericho with Him as part of the new creation in the risen Christ. It will never be levelled to the ground again.

Before Elijah commissioned Elisha, Elijah made him sit down and told Elisha to consider the cost. In a similar way, the Lord asks each member of the Church to sit down and count the cost. (Luke 14:28) Are we willing to follow His footsteps, to be faithful unto death, sacrificing everything to gain the crown of life? May our answer be the same as Elisha's: 'As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.' (2 Kings 2:2)

The time that Elijah and Elisha spent together after crossing the Jordan corresponds to the forty days our Lord and disciples spent together after His resurrection and prior to His ascension. (2 Kings 2:9-10) The promise to Elisha was that if he remained with Elijah and saw him taken up, he would receive a 'double portion' or the firstborn's portion of the spirit. We too, as the Church, are deemed as the real firstborn. When the chariot of fire and horses of fire parted Elijah and Elisha, and Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind, it pictures our Lord's ascension into heaven.

When Elijah was taken, 'Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart.' (2 Kings 2:12) Similarly, we do not know our Lord after the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16), but we recognise Him as our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb. 6:20) Elisha tore his clothes to be clothed by the resurrected Christ. Elisha then took the mantle of Elijah and smote the Jordan River, traversing it, picturing the power at Pentecost. Elisha wore Elijah's mantle for the rest of his life, picturing how the members of the Church need to continue to wear the robe of Christ's righteousness.

Both Elijah and Elisha are tied to the history of Jericho, and together they resemble the history of our Lord and the disciples who lived in a wicked world. On one occasion, the Apostle Paul resembles both Elijah and Elisha. Both Elijah and Elisha raised a young boy, and they both were at the 'upper room', resembling heaven. The upper room has a clear view of the heavens. On both occasions, Elijah and Elisha stretched themselves on a dead young boy to revive him.

‘Then he (Elijah) stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the LORD, “LORD my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”’ (1 Kings 17:21) ‘Then he (Elisha) lay down on the child’s body, placing his mouth on the child’s mouth, his eyes on the child’s eyes, and his hands on the child’s hands. And as he stretched out on him, the child’s body began to grow warm again!’ (2 Kings 4:34)
Strangely, the history of the Apostle Paul at Troas resembles the history of Elijah and Elisha.
‘Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!”’ (Acts 20:10)
For a reason, the Apostle Paul healed the young man at Troas, as the history of Troas is coupled with the history of Judah’s other son, Zarah. This is something new. Have you ever wondered why?

- The flag of Ulster has the Star of King David on it?
- The former flag of Ireland had the golden harp of King David on it?
- The hand of Ulster is red?

The symbol of the tribe of Judah is either a golden or a red lion. We need to retrace the history of Tamar who had twins named Perez and Zarah. Study my notes on Perez. (Mark 5:21-43; 8:27–30) God uses the unusual birth of the twins to create the genealogy of Judah via Zarah and Perez. In this unusual event, one of the twins put out his hand first, and the midwife tied a scarlet thread to it and said, ‘This one came out first.’
Unexpectedly, the hand withdrew, and the other twin, Perez, was born first. Afterwards, Zerah, with the scarlet thread tied to his hand, was born. (Genesis 38:27-30) There is a real turn of events – the first shall be last and the last shall be first.
Perez symbolises the golden lion of Judah. It is a rampant lion with a ruling sceptre. It depicts the royal house of David through the Perez/Judah bloodline.
Since this remarkable birth, Zarah was always known as the ‘Red Hand’, having lost his birthright to his brother Perez. In Egypt, Zarah knew he had lost his birthright, and his family left Judea and migrated north from Egypt to Troas (Troy), Iberia (Spain), Ireland, and Scotland, and they too had many kings. When the Babylonian and Roman Empires invaded them at Troas and Iberia (Spain), they fled to Ireland and later into Scotland. In Ireland, you will recognise the Red Hand of Ulster, which are the Zarahites from the tribe of Judah. They always had that symbol in their travels wherever they went. With their travels, the Zarahites decided to use their own Judah/Zarah version of the Judahite emblem, which is the red rampant lion. So now we have two lions of one bloodline: the golden lion as the symbol of the tribe of Judah and the red lion of Zarah.
At the time of the Babylonian captivity, King David’s ruling bloodline through Perez/Judah ended. The Babylonians invaded Jerusalem, and Perez/Judah’s last ruling king was Zedekiah. All his sons were murdered. Jeremiah (who wrote the Book of Jeremiah) was Zedekiah’s grandfather, and cunningly, he took the two daughters (princesses) of Zedekiah with him from Israel to Egypt to finally end their journey at Ireland. It is recorded in the history of the Greeks and the Spanish (Iberia). I believe Jeremiah and the two princesses escaped to Ireland with the Ark of the

Covenant, a golden trident, King David's harp, and the stone of destiny – also known as Jacob's pillar. Is it not ironic that the former flag of Ireland would fly the harp of King David? Is it not ironic that we have the 'Red Hand' within the 'Star of David' on the flag of Ulster, Ireland? What about the unofficial red rampant flag of Scotland, dating back thousands of years? Many believe the other daughter of Zedekiah married within the Scottish hierarchy, a hierarchy descending from Zarah, Judah's twin brother.

The Apostle Paul visited Troas for a reason, as their history is heavily impregnated with the history of Zerah. Zarah's descendants who fled Egypt had many sons, and his great-grandsons are called Darda. (1 Chronicles 2:6) In the Authorised Version of the Old Testament, the name is spelled as Dara, but in the margin, the alternate spelling is that he is also known as Darda. The famous Jewish historian Josephus called him Dardanus. This is significant, as Darda is known in history. He migrated northward across the Mediterranean Sea to North West Asia Minor. There, the first king of Judah ruled, many years before King David. Darda, or Dardanus, established his kingdom at Asia Minor, known later as Troy, in the district of the Dardanelles. It is a narrow strait and an internationally significant waterway located in north-western Turkey.

The descendants of Darda ruled ancient Troy for several hundred years, until the city was destroyed in the famous 'Siege of Troy'. Aeneas, the last of the royal bloodline of Zarah-Judah, collected the remnants of his nation and travelled with them to Italy. Aeneas' grandson, Brutus, with a large part of the Trojans, continued with his mission and gathered more followers in his journey through Iberia or Spain, to 'the great white islands'. It is the ancient name for Britain, known by its chalky white cliffs – the white cliffs of Devon. At Totnes on the River Dart, twelve miles inland from Torbay, the oldest seaport in South Devon, there is a historical stone that commemorates the coming of Brutus to Britain. It is known as the 'Brutus stone', where he set foot when he first landed in Britain. Brutus founded the city of 'Caer Troai', or New Troy or New Troas. Britain is named after Brutus. The Romans later named it 'Londinium', or better known today as London.

As the descendants of Zarah abandoned Asia Minor to finally settle in Britain with Brutus, similarly the Apostle Paul also migrated from 'Troas' to Britain. The Apostle Paul followed the path from Troas to finally settle in London, and thus St Paul's Cathedral at London. Britain used to be a magnet, welcoming the true believers and also the Church. Today, the British and Foreign Bible Society is blatant proof that they did succeed in circulating the Scriptures globally.

The old Jericho was cursed as the previous world before Adam. (Gen. 1:2) The only means to restore the fallen earth or Jericho is at the expense of the firstborn son. The old is cursed, and whoever endeavours to involve himself with the once-fallen world or Jericho is cursed. The old Jericho is punished when Joshua entered the Land of Canaan. The new Jericho did reappear at the expense of the firstborn son, as witnessed in the history of King Ahab. (1 Kings 16:34) When our Lord visited Jericho, He was mindful of the history of both the old and the new Jericho. It was cursed, and it

was redeemed by the firstborn, and in this instance, the Firstborn Son is Jesus who will not only redeem Jericho but the complete earth. How shattering. His final journey on earth commenced at Jericho to finally die a cursed death at Golgotha. Via His death, the old fallen earth is delivered. The old world needed to be rebuilt, and the curse is the death of our Lord at Golgotha. The healing of Bartimaeus looks ahead to Christ's redemptive work via His resurrection from the dead. He became part of a total new creation at the cost of the old creation. Whenever Jericho is named, then all the truths of Christ's redemptive work today need to be stamped on our thoughts. It is not merely the restoration of the old fallen world with the new, but also the restoration of the ten lost tribes of Israel, who were deemed as lost and forgotten.

Bartimaeus cast away his old garment, knowing he would be healed to be clothed with a new garment. He never wanted to be soiled with the thoughts of his old garment. Similarly, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to 'lay aside every weight, and the sin that hangs on us so easily'. Bartimaeus desired to restore his vision at the cost of his old garment.

Who else escaped the tyranny of our earth at the expense of his garment? It was Joseph who worked as a slave at Potiphar's house. One day, Potiphar's wife asked Joseph to sleep with her. When he refused her, she caught him by the coat, and he escaped, leaving it in her hands. She used it as evidence to falsely accuse him of attempted rape. It is similar to our Lord Jesus who went to Jerusalem to seek those who were lost. As the woman (Jewish nation) caught Him (Jesus) by the coat, similarly to Joseph, Jesus forsook the Jewish nation to leave them vulnerable. Previously, Joseph was forsaken by his brothers, stripped of his multi-coloured coat when he was thrown into a pit or well. At that time, it pictures our Lord's death and resurrection.

When Joseph escaped the woman, he got rid of his garment, as Christ who left us to go to heaven. After they hung Jesus on the cross, four Roman soldiers sought to divide the clothes and coats Jesus wore. They were not aware that they were fulfilling the prophecy found in Psalm 22:18, where David wrote. They parted His clothes and cast lots to see who won which piece of clothing. Upon Christ's resurrection, He distanced Himself from the Jewish nation. Joseph used to live in Potiphar's private home (to portray Judaism during the time of Jesus), but they both forsook the house, soaking all the false accusations and bearing shame. Joseph proved himself in the Egyptian prison, and soon he was favoured with the guards and was placed in charge of the other prisoners. He correctly interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's servants. This event would later lead to his opportunity to stand before Pharaoh by interpreting the king's dreams. When he did, Joseph was promoted from prisoner to prime minister overnight!

God is the tailor, and He designs our clothing to conform to our position and purpose in life. Our social status is portrayed by our clothing. If a person loses his clothing, he loses his status. Willingly, Elijah gave his official garment to Elisha to be entrusted with Elijah's calling. (1 Kings 19:16) Elisha's possession of this mantle was a visual indication that Elisha continued with the work Elijah commenced.

The garment Jesus wore depicted Him as the King of the Jews, and that is the reason why they gambled for His coat.
The Apostle Paul said: ‘Bring the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus when you come, and the books, especially the parchments.’ (2 Tim. 4:13) Paul didn’t want just any cloak — he wanted the particular one he had left in Troas with Carpus. So he was asking Timothy to go out of his way to travel the 600 miles to Troas to get this cloak. It was a special garment of sentimental value. He had plans to visit Britain, and in no way did he die a premature death.
Jonathan entrusted his robe to David. (1 Sam. 18:4) Jonathan did not give it to David because David soiled his clothes when he fought Goliath — it was a symbolic act of pledging his allegiance to the one he thought to be the future King of Israel.
Jericho in Hebrew can be translated as ‘Moon’. As the moon orbits the earth, its appearance changes from new moon to full moon. A complete lunar cycle is from one new moon to the other. Similarly, Jericho was destroyed many times and experienced many glorious times (full moons), but its glory faded to be levelled to the ground many times. Jericho existed before the great flood of Genesis 1:2, and it is known as the oldest city on earth, experiencing many ‘lunar cycles’ and devastated many times.
Jericho is known by its palm trees. The tree has a tall solitary stem with a crown of leaves. Its crown is exalted into the heavens. Somehow, it reflects the kingdom of men: the rise and fall of many kingdoms on earth. Jericho will be punished, but a remnant will always surface, as with Rahab who escaped the fury of Jericho. Similarly, the ten lost tribes of Israel will also escape the fury of Jericho, and it is portrayed in the history of Bartimaeus. God assigned high value to His people who endured the tribulations of life to be called His ‘remnant’. On several occasions, God speaks of His remnant: the people who survived the tribulation. Noah and his family were a remnant who were saved from millions of other people on earth. Only Lot and his two daughters survived the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. When Elijah despaired that he thought he was the only one left in Israel who had not bowed down to idols, God assured him that He had reserved a remnant of 7,000 people who did not bow down to Baal. A remnant of His people is referred to 18 times in the Old Testament. Even if the people of Israel were as numerous as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return or be saved. (Rom. 9:27; Isa. 48:19) Jesus walked in Jericho, and only a remnant of them will be saved. Willingly, He took the curse, but He will open the eyes of the blind to restore the ten lost tribes of Israel before He visits Jerusalem. His journey commences with the ten lost tribes of Israel, and it ends at Jerusalem.
Today, during our dispensation of grace, our Lord blesses the ten lost tribes of Israel, and He heads towards Jerusalem. Once our Lord accomplished His work at Jericho, then only will He concern Himself with Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. They will repent on the Day of the Lord. That is the reason why the two men were healed from their blindness, as the two depict the firstborn right of Ephraim to be arbitrated during our dispensation of grace.

Luke tells us more about Jericho. It is Zacchaeus who climbed into the sycamore tree at Jericho to get a better picture of Jesus. (Luke 19:1-10) He climbed into the cursed fig tree bearing no fruit. The olive, the fig tree, and the vine are used to illustrate the nation of Israel, and the wild olive, fig, and vine bearing no fruit are deemed as cursed in the Bible. Zacchaeus climbed into a wild fig tree that was cursed. Strangely, here Zacchaeus, who climbed into the wild fig tree, was blessed. During our dispensation of grace, the cursed (ten lost tribes of Israel) will be blessed, and brilliantly, Zacchaeus depicts the truths of our dispensation.

Jesus knew where His people are, where to find them, where they commonly dwell or where they are clustered, as He is God, omniscient. He said to him, 'Zacchaeus' – He knew him and could call him by his name. Zacchaeus left the cursed tree, and together they went to his house, and until today we do not know where it is. The house is the lost or the 'scattered tribes of Israel'. If we seek the risen Lord, where do we find Him today? We find Him amongst the lost tribes of Israel who are susceptible to the Gospel.

'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' v. 48In the book of Hosea, we read that the house of Israel (in contrast to the house of Judah) were called Lo-Ammi ('Not my people'). During the time of the Old Testament, the house of Judah were never called Lo-Ammi. Hosea prophesied that the ten lost tribes of Israel, which were disowned as not my people, will one day become His people (Ammi). 'I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy. I will say to them which were not my people, "Thou art my people. "' (Hos. 1:6, 10; 2:23)

So great are the changes grace has on His rejected people, and they are known as God's peculiar people, His remnant. Both the Apostle Paul and Peter quoted Hosea's prophecy, who confirms that indeed the ten lost tribes were cut off from God, previously known as not My people. But hidden in these verses, a future restoration of the lost tribes of Israel is promised. (Rom. 9:24, 25; 1 Pet. 2:10) Both the apostles apply this prophecy, saying that a people who were shown no mercy (the lost sheep) will be shown mercy; and the people to whom God was merciful (Jewish nation) will not be shown any mercy. Thus, the old formula always surfaces: the last will be first and the first will be last.

The New Testament clarifies the Old Testament, especially the many Messianic prophecies concerning Christ and the creation of the Church today. The fourth edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek Testament (1993) lists 343 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, with 2,309 hints and verbal parallels. It is impressive, as there are nearly 8,000 verses in the New Testament.

Then Jesus stood still. v. 49When Stephen, the first martyr, was stoned, he looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (Acts 7:55-56) He is standing as the resurrected. The Bible does not explain why Jesus stood, but obviously He cared about Stephen so much that He stood right before His servant who was stoned. He stood as He was about to receive Stephen's spirit to honour him. Similarly, we too will greet Him standing if we serve Him faithfully and obediently.

And they call the blind man, saying unto him, “Have confidence, rise; he calls thee.” v. 50Bartimaeus had to stand, serving our Lord. We are called to go outside the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ as He once did for us. (Heb. 13:13) We need to be like the followers of David: the 400 men who were persecuted with David before he became the king of Israel. At that moment in history, David escaped to the cave of Adullam.
‘So when his brothers and all his father’s house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him.’ (1 Sam. 22:1, 2) The men who followed David picture us who eagerly await Christ’s glorious return to earth.
There will be a ‘new moon’ at Jericho, sparkling new hope for a revived Israel, soaking up the blessings of the firstborn son who is Ephraim.
‘I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people.’ (Mic. 2:12) The lost tribes of Israel are reckoned as derelict, having no hope, but unbeknown to them, the Church is the most blessed people of all time.
‘Master, that I might receive my sight.’ v. 51Bartimaeus’ wish was to ‘see’ our Lord, to have his eyes opened. We too need to pray the prayer of the Apostle Paul: ‘That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.’ (Phil. 3:10) Paul deeply desired to know Christ in an intimate fashion, to experience an even deeper relationship. Firstly, he wanted to know:

- The power of His resurrection. Thus, the Apostle Paul saw himself differently – as dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6:11) Our old body is in a grave on the outskirts of Jerusalem, and we possess a new glorified body in Christ.
- To share in His sufferings: Paul’s desire to know Christ was so great he was willing, if need be, to suffer as He suffered. And indeed, Paul did suffer in many ways (2 Cor. 11:23-27), bearing in mind that Christ also suffered for us, leaving us a great example.
- To be made conformable to His death: Paul was willing to die as Christ. He wanted to be like Christ in His death, gaining complete victory over all sin. ‘For he that is dead is freed from sin.’ (Rom. 6:7) Our eyes of faith do see Jesus differently, crowned with glory and honour. (Heb. 2:9)

It says in Isaiah that Jesus will open the eyes of the blind. He will free the captives from prison, releasing the people who sit in dark dungeons. (Isa. 42:7) He will say to the prisoners, ‘Come out in freedom’, and to those in darkness, ‘Come into the light.’ They will be my sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare. (Isa. 49:9)
When many Christians study this passage, they usually say: yes, Jesus did open the eyes of the blind and the disciples did escape the prison, but that is the superficial fulfilment. There is a far greater connotation, even when the blind were made to see.

The people who are spiritually blind will have their eyes opened, and this passage is addressed to the lost tribes of Israel. They were deemed as lost and blind, never to return from their captivity.
Indeed, the lost tribes of Israel were held captive, but our Lord did come to redeem them to be freed. Israel used to be free, and they were dumped in slavery, but thanks to our Lord bearing the curse, Israel is free – and yet they are captive. They did not return to Israel as the Jewish nation after the Babylonian captivity.
Acts 5 is prophetic in nature, when the high priest was overcome with jealousy, grabbing the apostles to make a public show of them and to imprison them. At night, an angel from the Lord opened the prison doors, and he led them out. The angel told them to go, take their place in the temple, and tell the people everything about the Gospel. Early in the morning, they went to the temple as they had been told and began to preach. The angel of the Lord is Christ Himself, and He told them to preach at the temple. That pictures our dispensation, as they were taken from the captivity or the dungeon, but as a nation, they chose to remain in captivity, not running away and enjoying their freedom. The two disciples were Peter and John, and together they portray the Church. Peter portrays the two tribes of Israel, and John the ten tribes of Israel. We, as the Church, are called from captivity or from the ten tribes of Israel, and as the Church, we are part of the only true temple, and it is the Church with Christ in heaven.
Acts 16 v. 25 says the prison doors were opened the second time. When both Paul and Silas were in prison, they were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. All at once, there was a violent earthquake, and it shook the prison's foundations. The doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. When the prison guard woke in the morning, he noticed the doors of the prison were open. He thought they had all escaped, so he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. Paul shouted out loudly, 'Don't harm yourself!' That day, the jailer's entire household were saved, including all the prisoners. On that day, the Apostle Paul spoke on behalf of all the prisoners, as each of them accepted Christ. Collectively, they chose to remain in captivity.
In Ephesians 4:1, the Apostle Paul reckons himself as a prisoner of the Lord. He urges each believer to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. The Apostle Paul agreed to remain a prisoner! The Book of Acts ends when Paul says he dwelt two years in his own rented house (prison) at his own expense and gladly received any person who wished to know more about the Lord Jesus Christ. In prison, no one tried to interfere. (Acts 28:30-31) Anyone could visit him, but he had to remain in prison. It is similar to house arrest: knowing once you are inside, you are confined to your space. The Apostle Paul remained as a prisoner of the Lord and not of Caesar. Festus agreed that Paul did not deserve imprisonment or a death penalty, and if he wished, he could have been freed – if only he had not appealed to a hearing with Caesar. (Acts 26:31-32) He did this willingly, and the two years he spent in prison depict the truths of our dispensation. We too are deemed as prisoners, and now it will be easier to understand a misunderstood verse in the Psalms:

‘You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious so the Lord God may dwell there.’ (Ps. 68:18) It says when Christ ascended to heaven, He took the captive to be in captivity! Who are the captives? Are they the dead, and is David talking about the people in Hades?
No, Paul speaks about the Church who are imprisoned.
He simply says when Christ died to be resurrected, He did ascend into heaven. When He ascended into heaven, He took the captive to be in captivity. Thus, the ten lost tribes of Israel who were ‘imprisoned’ with the Assyrian captivity remained in captivity and did not return to Israel as the Jews in the past. We used to be aliens and had no part in the blessings of Israel, but now we are looked upon differently. Since we accepted Christ, we have no rights on earth, as we relinquished our right when we accepted Christ. We ought to remain as captives, but to God we are free indeed. We are dead to the world, and they may regard us as captives or imprisoned, but God sees us differently.
The captive people in Psalm 68 are not the dead in the abyss. The people who were taken captive are deemed as dead to the world. Previously, they had no share in the blessings of Israel, but once they accept Christ, they will remain in captivity. It is like Joseph who went from one prison to the other. He used to be a prisoner at Potiphar’s household, and since he rejected his wife, he was thrown into another prison. We are rejected by the world today, but our position has changed.
It is easy to explain this difficult verse once the ten lost tribes of Israel come into the equation. Since 721 B. C. , they were taken captive, but today in our dispensation, many did accept Christ, and yet they are still imprisoned. They never returned to Israel as some Jews did after the Babylonian captivity. They are scattered all over the world, but they do have a heavenly position in Christ, and unbeknown to the world, they are blessed as His real firstborn. The words of the Psalms, ‘You have ascended on high’, is our Lord who is in heaven as our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. He is the head of the Church, of us who are imprisoned, and we are the outcast of the world.
We are like the 400 men who escaped with David to the cave of Adullam: it was David’s place of refuge. He could not go to his house, he could not go to the palace, he could not go to Samuel, he could not go to Jonathan, he could not go to the house of the Lord, and he could not go to the ungodly men. The name Adullam means ‘refuge’. Today, in our gloomy world, God wants to be ‘our refuge’ as He was to David at the cave of Adullam.

A Schematic Overview of Jesus’s Passion Week - Mark 11 -16

Jesus’ final week in Jerusalem (often called Passion Week) spans from His triumphal entry to His resurrection. The Gospel accounts (especially Mark 11–16, with parallels in Matthew, Luke, and John) provide the details.

Day 1: Triumphal Entry (Palm Sunday) – Mark 11:1–11 (cf. Matt 21, Luke 19, John 12)

- Location: From Bethphage/Bethany (Mount of Olives) into Jerusalem.
- Events: Jesus sends disciples for a colt (unridden, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9). Crowds spread garments and branches, shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Psalm 118:25–26). Jesus enters the temple, looks around, then returns to Bethany for the night.
- Significance: Public acclaim as King (Son of David), yet no coronation—only a humble donkey. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41–44), prophesying its destruction for rejecting "the time of your visitation." This is not the full fulfilment of Zechariah 9 (no war, no global peace); it awaits His second coming. The fig tree (Bethphage = "house of unripe figs") and donkey imagery point to Israel's fruitlessness under the old covenant and the Church as the "colt" (new covenant people) born from Israel.
- Key Quote: "If these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40). The "rejected stone" (Psalm 118:22) becomes the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

Day 2: Temple Cleansing & Fig Tree Cursed – Mark 11:12–19

- Location: Bethany to Jerusalem temple.
- Events: Jesus curses the barren fig tree (symbol of Israel's fruitlessness under the law; cf. Matthew 21:43). He cleanses the temple, driving out merchants ("house of prayer for all nations" → "den of thieves," Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11). Evening return to Bethany.
- Significance: Judgment on empty religion. The fig tree withers from the roots (Mark 11:20), picturing the end of the old covenant system. The temple's outer court (for Gentiles) is cluttered with commerce, blocking true worship. Jesus' zeal foreshadows the temple's destruction (AD 70) and the new temple—His body and the Church (John 2:19–21; Ephesians 2:21).

Days 3–4: Teaching, Authority Challenged, Olivet Discourse – Mark 11:20–13:37

- Location: Temple, Mount of Olives.
- Events:
    - Fig tree lesson: Faith, forgiveness, prayer (Mark 11:22–26).
    - Authority questioned; parables (wicked tenants, two sons) expose leaders' rejection of the "son"/heir (Mark 12:1–12; cf. Psalm 118:22).
    - Trap questions on taxes, resurrection, greatest commandment.
    - Widow's mite (true devotion vs. show).
    - Olivet Discourse (Mark 13): Signs of the end, temple destruction, abomination of desolation, great tribulation, second coming. Warnings to watch and pray.
- Significance: Jesus teaches openly but faces growing opposition. The "rejected stone" becomes the capstone (Psalm 118). Daniel's 70

weeks (69 fulfilled at the triumphal entry; 70th future) frames the timeline. The discourse bridges AD 70 destruction with end-time events, including the Day of the Lord (Zechariah 14). The Church (as "colt") and remnant Israel await final fulfilment.

Day 5: Last Supper & Gethsemane (Maundy Thursday) – Mark 14

- Location: Upper room (likely Joseph of Arimathea's), Mount of Olives/Gethsemane.
- Events: Passover meal (new covenant in His body/blood). Jesus predicts betrayal (Judas) and denial (Peter). Gethsemane: Agony, prayer ("not what I will, but what you will"), arrest. Disciples flee.
- Significance: The old Passover (lamb, exodus) fulfilled in the true Lamb. "This is my body… my blood of the covenant" (Mark 14:22–24). The cup and bread point to substitutionary death and new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34). Gethsemane shows full humanity and obedience. Betrayal by a friend (Psalm 41:9) and scattering (Zechariah 13:7) occur, yet Jesus remains in control.

Day 6: Trials, Crucifixion, Burial (Good Friday) – Mark 14:53–15:47

- Location: Jewish trial (Caiaphas), Roman trial (Pilate), Golgotha, Joseph's tomb.
- Events:
    - Jewish trial: Blasphemy charge ("Son of the Blessed"); false witnesses; high priest tears garments.
    - Roman trial: "Are you the King of the Jews?"; Barabbas released; scourging; mocking (purple robe, crown of thorns).
    - Crucifixion (9 AM–3 PM): "My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22); darkness; veil torn; centurion's confession.
    - Burial: Joseph of Arimathea (Sanhedrin member, secret disciple) requests body; placed in new tomb; women watch.
- Significance: Innocent Lamb slain. The cross exposes human sin (rejection by leaders, crowds, even disciples) while fulfilling Scripture (numbered with transgressors, Isaiah 53:12; garments divided, Psalm 22:18). The torn veil opens access to God (Hebrews 10:19–20). "It is finished" (John 19:30) ends the old system. Joseph's tomb (rich man's grave, Isaiah 53:9) and the "colt"/donkey symbolism reinforce the shift from old (Judah/law) to new (Church/grace). The centurion (Gentile) confesses what Israel missed.

Day 7: Sabbath Rest – Mark 15:42–47 (cf. Luke 23:56)

- Location: Tomb sealed and guarded (Matthew 27:62–66).
- Events: Body rests in tomb; women prepare spices but rest on Sabbath.
- Significance: Jesus' body in the grave mirrors the old covenant's "rest" (Hebrews 4). The Sabbath points to the greater rest in Christ (Hebrews 4:9–10). Guards ensure no fraud, ironically confirming the resurrection.

Day 8: Resurrection (Easter Sunday) – Mark 16

- Location: Tomb, road to Emmaus, upper room, Galilee.
- Events:
    - Women find empty tomb; angel announces resurrection (Mark 16:1–8).
    - Appearances: Mary Magdalene (first witness); two on Emmaus road; apostles; Great Commission (Mark 16:15–18); ascension (Mark 16:19).
    - Signs follow believers (casting out demons, new tongues, protection, healing)—confirming the apostolic message.
- Significance: The stone rolled away; empty tomb + appearances prove victory over death. “Go into all the world” extends the mission. The “third day” fulfils Scripture (Hosea 6:2; 1 Corinthians 15:4). Jesus is the firstborn of the new creation (Colossians 1:18); the Church is His body. The “colt” (Church) is freed from the old yoke.

Theological Arc: From Earthly Hopes to Heavenly Reality

- Palm Sunday “Failure”: Crowds expected a political Messiah (throne, not thorns). Jesus weeps—rejection leads to AD 70 destruction (and future Day of the Lord, Zechariah 14). The “triumphal entry” is partial; full fulfilment awaits His return.
- Old → New Covenant: Fig tree/temple cleansing = end of fruitless religion. The cross ends the old system (veil torn); resurrection inaugurates the new (Church as living temple, Ephesians 2:19–22).
- Two Houses of Israel: Judah (fig tree, donkey mother, “old”) rejects; the “lost sheep”/10 tribes (colt, new covenant people) receive. The Church (largely from these tribes) bears the firstborn blessings today (Romans 11).
- Hidden Kingdom: The kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36) yet real—inaugurated at resurrection, hidden in the Church, consummated at the second coming.
- Witness & Mission: The apostles’ eyewitness testimony (seeing, touching the risen Christ) launches the gospel to the ends of the earth. Signs confirmed the message then; today, the written Word and Spirit empower us.
- Daniel’s 70 Weeks: 69 weeks end at the triumphal entry (Sir Robert Anderson’s calculation: March 14, 445 BC → April 6, 32 AD). The 70th week awaits future fulfilment (abomination, tribulation, repentance at the Day of the Lord).

Key Themes Across the Week

- Rejection & Suffering: Prophesied (Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 13:7). The “stone” rejected becomes cornerstone.
- New Covenant: Blood and body (Last Supper); veil torn; access to God.
- Resurrection Power: Empty tomb, appearances, Great Commission. The “third day” is decisive (Hosea 6:2).
- Church as “Colt”: Born from Israel (donkey), never yoked by law, carrying Christ into the world.

- Future Fulfilment: Palm Sunday foreshadows the Day of the Lord (Zechariah 14; split Mount of Olives). Jerusalem's judgment (AD 70) previews end-time events.

The week that seemed a "let-down" (no earthly throne) was God's triumph: sin defeated, death conquered, new creation begun. The cross was not failure but the means of redemption. "He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11).

The resurrection validates everything—without it, our faith is vain (1 Corinthians 15:14). The same power that raised Jesus works in us today (Ephesians 1:19–20).

Mark 11:1–8
And when they came near to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sends forth two of his disciples 2and said unto them, Go to the place which is before you; and as soon as ye are entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, upon which no man ever sat; loose him and bring him. 3And if anyone says unto you, Why do ye this? Say ye that the Lord has need of him, and straightway he will send him here. 4And they went and found the colt tied by the door outside between two ways, and they loosed him. 5And some of those that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6Then they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded, and they let them go. 7They brought the colt to Jesus and cast their garments on him, and he sat upon him. 8And many spread their garments in the way, and others cut down leaves off the trees and spread them in the way.
Palm Sunday must have been spectacular, but it ended awkwardly, raising more questions than answers. He is proclaimed as King, but there is no coronation or anointing. He enters the temple, glances around, and then quietly leaves to spend a night in nearby Bethany. To the world His entry is deemed a total failure. To the utter disbelief of the disciples, He received no throne, but a crown of thorns and a cross. Jesus hasn't sought out the power centres of Israel. He preached in the despised backwater of Galilee and the outskirts of the land.
Most Bible commentators head this chapter with the words: Christ's 'triumphal entry' into Jerusalem, but it didn't feel like that to the disciples —His anticipated Kingdom ended in a let-down. Unique to Luke's record, it says when Jesus came near to Jerusalem, he looked across the Kidron valley and 'wept over' the city. Luke 19:41. This is one of the three instances mentioned in the New Testament where Jesus did shed tears. Jn. 11:35; Heb. 5:7. The Man of Sorrows grieved as the Jewish nation refused to acknowledge His true identity and mission. The very peace they sought would be taken from them, and in return, Jerusalem would be devastated. The reason is they did not 'know the time of their visitation.' Luke 19:44.

Not many good things happened in Jerusalem. His disciples hailed Him when He descended from the Mount of Olives, but the people in Jerusalem refused Him. Bethany is nestled on the south-eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, and our Lord resided there for the five nights leading to His crucifixion. Luke 21:37 says each night He returned to Bethany after He taught in the temple or on the Mount of Olives.

If you had to enter Jerusalem coming from the Mount of Olives, you would need to traverse the Kidron valley. More than likely, the entrance would have been the eastern entrance of the temple that is plastered today. Since the time of Christ's resurrection, the complete geology of Jerusalem and the temple changed. The walls of Jerusalem and the Temple were levelled to the ground—and even the foundation stones of Jerusalem were uprooted and overturned. No stone remained on top of another, as Jesus prophesied. The Western Wall we know today was built by King Herod in the year 20 B. C. when he enlarged the temple. To manage this great undertaking, he had to build a retaining wall as the temple bordered some steep valleys. According to the Roman-Jewish historian Josephus, construction of the walls took 11 years. Many historians say when they levelled Jerusalem to the ground, their grand purpose was to distort the landmarks of Jerusalem. They dumped all the building rubble into the Kidron Valley, up to 15 metres deep, to vent their great hatred for Israel. Finally, ancient Israel was renamed Syria Palaestina. It happened during the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–136 A. D.), and since then the only remaining relic of Jerusalem is the Wailing Wall (Western Wall). Bethphage is the first place Jesus visited when He left Jericho to go to Jerusalem. Bethphage can be translated as a 'house of unripe figs' or a 'house of green figs,' meaning they were inedible.

Song of Solomon 2:13 speaks of the green unripe figs that hang on the tree throughout the winter.

At Bethphage, two disciples had to get the colt. Some sceptics accuse Jesus of stealing the colt, but why did the owners allow the two disciples to take it? Obviously, our Lord didn't steal the colt, as the owner made no effort to either stop or prevent them getting it. Obviously, there is more to this story. Somehow the owner of the colt knew about this momentous event, and it would not surprise if Joseph from Arimathea arranged this. Daniel prophesied that the Anointed One (Lord Jesus) will be cut off, and He will have nothing. Dan. 9:26.

When our Lord descended the Mount of Olives, He prophesied the devastation of Jerusalem. Jerusalem would be levelled to the ground, destroying all its landmarks. Don't be mistaken: present-day Jerusalem will suffer the same fate with Christ's second coming to earth, as with the previous Jerusalem, shortly after Christ's resurrection.

The question is, what is meant by the words: 'He shall have nothing'? When Jesus approached Jerusalem, He did not claim the throne of David. The throne was taken from Jerusalem, and what happened to the promised throne? Jerusalem would be left derelict, and our Lord did not claim the throne of David, but He will, with His second return to earth—on the imminent Day of the Lord.

On the day when King Solomon was crowned, he too rode on a donkey. 1 Kings 1:33. Similarly, our Lord chose to ride on a donkey, and it is prophesied in Zechariah.

‘Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’ Zech. 9:9.

It portrays our Lord as a humiliated King. On Palm Sunday, our Lord did not seize His throne. Jesus descending the Mount of Olives is no fulfilment of Zechariah 9. No, it awaits a grand fulfilment. We need to study the complete chapter to fully grasp the backdrop of our Lord riding on the donkey. We all agree the words of Zechariah 9 were not fulfilled, as our Lord was crucified as the humiliated. The chapter mentions Tyre, Sidon, and the four cities of the Philistines, who will war against Israel, including the prophecies made against the sons of Greece. 9:13. They denote the latter Greek Empire.

On Palm Sunday, there was no mention of war, but with Christ’s second coming to earth, the political arena will change, and there will be talk of many wars. It will coincide with the end of Daniel’s 70th week. It is known that our Lord did come on the foal of a donkey, poor and not as a king. Nothing has changed today, as the world reckons Him as the humiliated; so Zechariah 9 is still relevant to us today.

We must never say that the words ‘see your king is coming’ are fulfilled. No, it is still in the making, as in the future there will be war against Syria (v. 1), Tyre, Sidon (v. 2), Philistines (v. 5), and finally the revived Greek Empire (v. 13). It was not fulfilled with Christ’s first coming to earth, but it denotes a time until Christ’s second coming to earth. Today we do not know the Lord as the Majestic One riding on a horse (Zech. 10:3), but Him riding on the foal of a donkey.

Everything in the Bible has at least two fulfilments or more. The reason is, if the Jewish nation had received Christ as Saviour, then there would have been only one fulfilment, but since they did not receive Christ, there will be a second fulfilment. Without doubt, the Old Testament does speak of Christ’s first return to earth, and in a hidden manner His second return is foretold. Theoretically, if the Jews had accepted Jesus as their Saviour with His first coming to earth, then the words of our Lord ‘riding on the foal of a donkey’ would have been fulfilled. If they had accepted His message, then they would have preached His message to all the corners of the earth, spelling the end of the Roman Empire.

Zechariah 14 was written after the Jewish nation returned from the Babylonian captivity, to prophesy that Jerusalem would be devastated yet again by an army coming from the north—or Russia—and they are equipped by God. Jerusalem was devastated by the Roman Empire, shortly after Christ’s ascension to heaven, but in the very near future, Russia and its armies will devastate Israel. Zechariah 9 is not the final fulfilment of Mark 11 and Luke 19. Our Lord descending the Mount of Olives hints of something to be fulfilled in the future. It foretells how the Church will accompany our Lord with His second coming to earth. It explains how the Church will return with our Lord from heaven, when He finally sets foot on the Mount of Olives. It is known as the ‘Day of the Lord.

’Today the Church is part of the hidden kingdom of Christ in heaven. Many rabbis protest, quoting Daniel 2:44, saying the kingdom will not be given to any, as the kingdom is limited to the Jewish nation. Since our Lord was resurrected from the dead, the members of the Church are real Israel. The kingdom of the stone (Dan. 2:45) is Christ, and the Apostle Peter said since we accepted Christ, we are the lively stones who are built on the ‘Stone’—namely Christ. 1 Pet. 2:5.

The colt is a male foal—or the Church today—and its mother is the donkey, or natural Israel, who was tied. From Israel a remnant is born, and they are known as the Church.

The colt was ridden upon, and neither was it ever yoked in slavery. It pictures the Church as a male child who is totally part of His flesh. We are not the bride of Christ, but His members (hands and feet).

The Jewish nation is the mother of the colt, and it was bent in slavery, but never the Church. The mother donkey was tied to the tree, but never the colt, who remained with its mother as the many ducklings following a goose. The colt did not meander away from its mother. Mother Nature has a sound instinct. At the end of Daniel’s 70th week, the Church is the foal, and the resurrected Christ will steer us. When our Lord returns on the Mount of Olives, we will be glorified with Him in glory. We will share His glory; thus it is essential for us to meet Him in the air with our rapture to heaven. After seven years we will be revealed with Him in glory. Israel will be dumbfounded, noticing us at the Mount of Olives. We will witness the final fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9.

Once we grasp our special relationship with our Lord, then anew we can study the finer details of this chapter. When our Lord headed towards Jerusalem, the first town He visited was Bethphage, known as the city of unripe figs.

The fig tree reflects the fourth dispensation, or the dispensation of the law —the works we do as part of our old nature. No matter how excellent they are, they will never suffice. Zacchaeus climbed into a fig tree to have a better view of the Lord Jesus, and He was called from the tree. Once he did, Jesus accepted him gladly, and He even stayed at his house. Today Zacchaeus reflects the believers of the Church, who distanced themselves from the dispensation of the law (fig tree) to obey Christ.

Never trust the ‘good works’ we do if they are coupled to our old nature. The works will never suffice; therefore we too need to distance ourselves from the fig tree—or the law.

Usually Jesus walked wherever He went, but on this occasion He needed a donkey. He knew exactly where to find one, to enter Jerusalem.

We may ask why Jesus went to Bethphage to get the colt, and were there two?

Sceptics are quick to mention that the other Gospel writers mention only ‘one colt’ on which Jesus rode. Mark says that Jesus told the two disciples that they would find ‘a colt tied, on which no one has sat.’ 11:2. Matthew contradicts Mark, suggesting there were two donkeys. The other Gospels do mention the one colt, and they never denied that the other donkey (the mother of the colt) was present. The fact that Mark, Luke, and John mention one young donkey does not mean there were not two. Both Mark

and Luke say that the colt they got for Jesus had never been ridden upon. Matthew omitted this piece of information. As one can see, throughout this story (and the rest of the Gospel accounts for that matter), the writers progressively augment each other's account. The truth is the mother of the colt is tied to a tree, and the colt meandered around his mother, refusing to leave her.

The young donkey is a male colt or foal. Zechariah too says the donkey was the foal of a female donkey.

And they brought the donkey and the colt, and they placed their garments on the colt, and Jesus rode upon it. Aramaic Bible, Matt. 21:7. Jesus rode the colt while possibly the mother donkey joined them.

The mother of the foal symbolises Israel, and the foal the Church. On this occasion the donkey is yoked, and they yearn to be freed. In the history of the Old Testament, the donkeys are searched for many times—as in the history of King Saul. His donkeys longed for freedom, as we who long to be freed from the law that yokes us so easily. In the Bible the donkeys are either tied or freed. They seek freedom, and it is attained via the younger generation—or the foal. Our Lord told two of His disciples to go to the village ahead of them, and there they would find a colt that had never been ridden upon. Luke 19:30. The two men picture the Church, and likewise the colt who was never burdened by the law. The colt was never burdened or yoked, and yet it chose to stay with his mother.

Bethphage—a place of unripe figs—pictures the Jewish nation as a donkey tied to a tree, and the figs too portray them. Shortly afterwards our Lord did warn them, saying they bear no fruit to eat, and the kingdom of God shall be taken away from them and it shall be given to a nation bringing forth fruit. Matt. 21:43. Several times the Bible speaks of the wild olive or the wild fig tree bearing no fruit, in contrast to the fruit-bearing tree. Romans 11 is one such example, mentioning the two olive trees. The Word of God was entrusted to the Jewish nation, and they did bear fruit, but since the time they rejected the resurrected Christ, they have not borne any fruit. The unbelieving branches were pruned to be later grafted in by the branches of the wild olive tree, who do believe in the resurrected Christ, and they will bear much fruit.

Donkeys are a lot like horses. We all have heard—and perhaps used—the term 'as stubborn as a donkey' or 'stubborn jackass.' Yes, if we work them too hard, they become ill, especially in the hot summer months. Then they are 'stubborn' to protect themselves. When we frighten or hurt them, they will definitely be 'stubborn.' Mules seem to have an ingrained protection to avoid total exhaustion. Some horses are so willing that they can literally be ridden to death, unlike the mule who avoids collapse. Once they reach a point, they simply rest. Thus the donkey's stubbornness depicts the true believer who refuses to be yoked by the law, yearning true freedom. The Jewish nation, who yearns for the law, is like an over-burdened donkey. The mother was tied, and the colt followed the mother wherever she went. Invisibly it is glued to its mother. The promises we have in Christ are rooted in the Jewish nation, and yet the Church is like the colt who was never yoked or tied to a tree. Indeed we are freed.

Everything is so mysterious, and it begs attention. Why does it say the mother is tied to the door at the crossroad, where the two ways meet? The one way will lead Jesus to the Jewish nation, and the other to the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

When the nation of Israel was born, the blood of the Passover lamb was smeared on the doorpost, becoming a living door. Since we too received the life of the Lamb—or the resurrected Christ—we are tied to the living door, and today we are known as the true firstborn in Christ. We followed the way leading to eternal life. Christ is the door that will lead us to life. Jn. 10:17. Since we are not yoked and meander freely, we are tied to Christ, but freed from the bondage of sin and slavery. We are not enslaved to the law. Gal. 5:1.

The colt was at the place where the two ways meet—or at the crossroad. In the Old Testament the 'crossroad' is vividly portrayed in the history of Jacob. The Old Testament town of Bethel (formerly named Luz) was one of the first places in the Bible where the patriarchs met God. The most famous of these encounters was Jacob's dream of a stairway leading to heaven, with angels ascending and descending, and the Lord standing above it. Gen. 28:10-22. In Hebrew the word Luz is written as a verb (Strong's no. 3868), and then it is translated as 'to turn aside or to go crooked.' Indeed in God's salvation plan, we followed the 'other path,' and it happened at Luz—or at the crossroads. The Jewish nation did not accept the resurrected Christ, and today we are caught in a detour lasting nearly 2,000 years. From that place (Luz), Jacob went to Laban, and he married his daughters. Altogether for Jacob, the detour lasted 20 years, and then he returned to the same spot, but then he was blessed with his wives and children. Laban and Luz was a great detour for Jacob, but with this detour, the blessings of the firstborn right are portrayed. Jacob had to escape from Esau who wanted to kill him, as Jacob ended with the firstborn right and not Esau. Jacob pictures the Church, and Christ is in the detour, and at the detour, Jesus chose Ephraim and not Judah.

Our Lord had relatives in Jerusalem, and they lived at Bethany, and He lacked no money. We know He willingly relinquished His eternal riches to die as a humble servant. Some believe His earthly possessions amounted to no more than the clothes on His back, and they were divided up by the soldiers who crucified Him. I believe our Lord had great wealth. One tricky question is how much wealth did the Magi give Jesus when they came to worship Him as the King of Kings? Matt. 2:1-12. Certainly their gifts helped sustain Jesus' family after Joseph died, but they also funded His public ministry. When the Magi arrived in Bethlehem, they gave to Jesus many gifts worthy of a King.

'And when they had come into the house, they found the little child with Mary His mother, and they bowed down and worshipped Him; then they opened their treasures and presented their gifts to Him—gold and frankincense and myrrh.' Matt. 2:11.

They travelled more than 1,000 miles to worship Him as the true King of Kings. The Magi were influential members of one of Parthia's two ruling classes, deciding who the real heirs to the throne of David were. Such dignitaries would have brought far more treasures, and the saddles of the

camels were laden with many gifts, including the gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Magi were powerful members of one of the two assemblies which elected the Parthian monarchs. One assembly was composed of the royal family, and the other consisted of the priests (the Magi). They were deemed as high Parthian officials. Parthians were descended from the 10 tribes of Israel, and their priests were probably descendants from the tribe of Levi, and the delegation of Magi were directed to Jesus by an angel from God. Their sense of awe occasioned unusually large gifts. God made sure that funds were available to help protect the life of Jesus and take care of His needs. The Magi helped fulfil the prophecy that Christ would be called out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1) and that He would live in Nazareth. Matt. 2:23.

There is no hint in the Gospels that Christ ever asked for donations to help fund His ministry, even though He and His twelve disciples had many expenses. Judas Iscariot carried ‘the bag’ (John 12:6; 13:29) containing money that paid for the group’s expenses. He abused his responsibility. If the group had little or no money, it would have been nothing to steal, and any theft by Judas would have been discreet. During the Last Supper, when Judas became possessed by the devil and left to betray Jesus, the disciples thought he was leaving to give a donation to the poor from the group. John 13:29. The tremendous wealth of the Magi helped not only Jesus’ family, but also the preaching of the Gospel.

When our Lord visited Jerusalem, He was met by His own family, and especially Joseph of Arimathea. He was rich and respected by the Jewish community, a member of the Sanhedrin. The Bible says little about Joseph, yet Isaiah 53:9 mentions him, saying they made His (Jesus’) grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. The Jewish Talmud records that Joseph was the great-uncle of Jesus, a younger brother of Mary’s father who owned the grave. I believe Jesus did not arrive in Jerusalem as an uninvited guest. Everything was prearranged by His own family and especially by Joseph of Arimathea. He arranged the donkey and the colt, and when Jesus was about to go to the cross on Calvary, His disciples asked Him: ‘Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?’ Mark 14:12. Jesus told them, ‘Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, “The Teacher says, where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.’ Apparently, Jesus planned and acquired the upper room from this unknown man, whom I believe to be none other than Joseph of Arimathea. The upper room was fully furnished for the Passover meal, and Jesus directed the disciples to the agreed place, plus the meal and the wine. Luke 19:28-44.

The Apostle Luke 19 details for us more of that day. He told His disciples at Bethphage that they would find a colt and they needed to untie it to give it to Him. Certainly, the words need to remind us of the conversation our Lord had with the Apostle Peter, saying: He will give to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever he shall bind on earth shall be

bound in heaven, and whatever he shall loosen on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Since Christ's resurrection from the dead, the old covenant will be ‘imprisoned’ and the new covenant will be ‘set free’, like the colt.
When they brought the colt to Jesus, the disciples threw their cloaks on the colt and set Jesus on them. As He went, they spread their cloaks in the way.
The clothing of the disciples that was placed on the colt does replicate the Church. The words ‘Your King is coming, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey’ (Zac. 9:9) need to alert us to greater spiritual truths. The donkey with the clothing of the disciples had the identity of the disciples, and together they picture the Church. Our Lord will steer the Church.
As they were getting close to Jerusalem, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, all the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen. Emmaus the blind man accompanied them. They said: ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!’ Most of the pictures taken of Jerusalem are from the Mount of Olives, as the temple is in clear view. Mind you, some of the Pharisees from the multitude said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’ He answered them, ‘I tell you that if these disciples were silent, the stones would cry out. ’
When He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you, even you, had known today the things which belong to your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, surround you, hem you in on every side, and dash you and your children within you to the ground. They will not leave in you one stone on another, because you did not know the time of your visitation. ’
Both Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118 help us to grasp the events at Jerusalem. Zechariah predicted the new king would ride on a donkey to bring righteousness and salvation to Jerusalem. But He would bring it in a different way: not through military might, but through humility; through sacrifice. Psalm 118 will surprise us. The subject of this Psalm is the death and resurrection of our Lord.
Psalm 118:19-21: ‘Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous will enter through it. ’
Jesus or the resurrected Christ is the gate. He is the gate of righteousness. He is the gate through which the righteous may enter into the Lord.
Psalm 118:22-23: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; this is the Lord’s doing; it is wonderful in our eyes. ’
Right there, amongst all the praises of the new King, we have this strange statement: the stone the builders reject has become the capstone. What does that mean? What is the metaphor of the rejected stone becoming the capstone? In Psalm 118:22, the builders kept ignoring the ‘capstone’. The capstone holds the entire structure together. It proves that the rejected stone is Jesus, and He alone is the capstone, printed on every dollar bill.
We have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by

human hands (2 Cor. 5:1). The Jewish nation snubbed the stone, but the other nations (the 10 lost tribes of Israel) did accept the capstone.
I am sure the Jewish nation grasped the meaning of the capstone: the missing stone that ought to be placed on top of the large pyramid of Giza, which is presently missing. The stone is rejected by the leaders of Jerusalem. Ultimately, the rejected stone becomes the exalted one!
Jesus was rejected at Jerusalem, but with His resurrection, He became the capstone of God's house! The capstone is the topmost stone, and the 'wonderful thing' the Psalmist is talking about is the calling of the Church. Ephesians 2:20 says that together we are His house, we are built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. The temple or the pyramid is built today but in heaven, and we as the members of the Church are its brickwork, but Christ is the chief cornerstone.
The Apostle Paul mentions what Christ is doing for us today: 'Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which you will in no way believe, if one declares it to you' (Acts 13:41; Hab. 1:5). The wonderful thing is not the temple of Solomon, but the Church built in heaven.
Psalm 118:24-25: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!
Palm Sunday should have been a day of rejoicing for everyone in Jerusalem. It was the day the Lord planned for the Jewish nation to celebrate their new King. But instead, we see Jesus weeping, visualising the devastation of Jerusalem. Jerusalem did not recognise what day it was. Some of the pilgrims did, but the leaders failed to acknowledge Jesus. Because they did not know what day it was, the city would be destroyed. In less than 40 years, His beloved city would lie in ruins because they did not rejoice and be glad in Him. Jesus wanted the nation to rejoice, but it did not happen, and that broke Jesus' heart.
The word 'hosanna' (Mark 11:9) is from the Hebrew word 'Hoshana', which means 'to save, rescue' or 'saviour'. This word was only used when referring to Jesus and particularly to 'the Son of David'. In the Hebrew, the word 'save' is 'yasha' and means 'to save, be saved', or 'to be delivered', and this might explain why they chanted this. 'Yasha' is very close to Joshua, which means 'Yahweh is salvation' or simply put 'God is salvation', and this is precisely what the name Jesus means.
Psalm 118:26-27: 'Blessed is he (the King) who comes in the name of the Lord. '
As the pilgrims sang this psalm and as they laid down the palm branches, they proclaimed Jesus as the new King. The disciples honoured Him when Jesus descended down the Mount of Olives, heading towards Jerusalem. His emotions were not those of joy. The crowds were jubilant, carpeting Jesus' path with garments and foliage, waving palm branches, and shouting 'Hosanna! Save us!' and 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!' But the Pharisees were annoyed and angry with their chant.
Is not it amazing that some can be caught up in a spirit of praise and others miss the point entirely and react critically? We see this phenomenon with David and Michal (2 Sam. 6:16, 20-23). Jesus shows no

sympathy with the unbelief of the Pharisees. His words are harsh when He spoke to their leaders who were blind.
‘The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you’ (Luke 19:43-44). Jesus defines the siege of a city. The city will be encircled and no one will escape. The embankment will protect the Romans from attacks, and Josephus was an eyewitness to the siege and fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. His writings are too horrible to mention, and no wonder Jesus wept as He saw with prophetic vision what would take place. If only the Jewish nation had accepted Jesus as the disciples did.
Instead of welcoming and submitting themselves to the King who entered Jerusalem and the temple, they rejected Him and plotted to kill Him.
It gets more complicated!
Daniel too wrote of this day. Daniel had a special insight from God when he narrated the development of all the kingdoms of the earth until the end time. He briefed us on the 70 weeks, a familiar phrase found in Daniel 9, which ended with Israel’s repentance.
‘Know therefore and understand that, from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be 7 weeks and 62 weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times’ (Dan. 9:25). This verse is vital, as all the other prophecies in the Bible pivot around this time frame. That is why Daniel says: ‘Know therefore and understand. ’
On Palm Sunday, Daniel’s 69th week ended dramatically. Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) proved more than a century ago in his book ‘The Coming Prince’ that the Bible is beyond dispute regarding the 69-week period. Until today, no one has refuted him. Sir Robert Anderson argued that Daniel’s 70th week commenced on 14th March 445 BC (1st Nissan). Nehemiah was troubled about the walls of Jerusalem, and he restored them. ‘And they said unto me, the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province is in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire’ (Neh. 1:3). Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, commencing Daniel’s 70 weeks on the 1st Nissan 445 BC, during the 20th year of King Artaxerxes' reign; as then the 70 weeks commenced for Israel. After the 62 + 7 weeks, the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself (Dan. 9:26), and then nothing of Christ’s Kingdom will be noticeable on earth. ‘Cut off’ in Hebrew is ‘karath’, or to be ‘executed’.
God gave the Jews the most sophisticated calendar on Earth. The Bible uses a 360-day calendar year for Israel’s prophecies and expects us to add the appropriate ‘leap months’ on schedule. So, the easiest way to unravel this prophecy is to first convert this prophecy into days.
To rebuild Jerusalem and its walls until the coming Messiah would be 173,880 days!
To convert the 173,880 days found in this prophecy into our 365. 2424-day solar years is 173,880 days ÷ 365. 2424 = 476 years.

Thus, the prophet Daniel told us it would be 476 years from the ‘commandment to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls’ until the time when the Messiah of the Jewish nation would reveal Himself to the Jewish nation. Now take the 476 years in this prophecy and simply start counting from March 14, 445 BC (when the command to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its wall), and you end on the exact year (even to the very day) when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the 10th Nissan (Palm Sunday). [My notes on Daniel 9]

Prophetically, our Lord pronounced the judgment that would befall Jerusalem and its people, and the reason is they rejected Him as their King. They failed to recognise the time of His visitation (Luke 19:44). It’s nothing new. Luke tells us when Jesus was born, there were a group of Jewish people in the temple ‘who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem’ (Luke 2:38). When Jesus the Messiah appeared to them, even though a baby, they received Him. Yet the majority of the nation rejected Jesus. Simeon and Anna the prophetess were looking for Him because they knew His time was coming near. Snubbing the prophecies is not commendable.

I believe the imminent return of our Lord on the Day of the Lord will be either on the 10th Nissan or the 10th Tishri, which is six months later. The months Nissan and Tishri changed once Israel was reckoned as a nation, and similarly it may change again to blend together the feasts belonging to the months Nisan and Tishri.

The Word of God is like a two-edged sword, compelling a response from us: to be either for or against Christ, to be part of Him or to be isolated and blind. The Jewish nation had to make a decision, and their rejection is mirrored in the following words.

‘He said of Jerusalem: … how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!’ (Luke 13:34)

Jesus ‘would’, but they ‘refused’. The tragedy over which Jesus is weeping is the tragedy of lost opportunity. The people of Jerusalem missed their golden opportunity. Jesus visited them, but they would not have Him. A willing heart makes the difference between ‘peace’ (19:42) and destruction (19:43–44). If it was true for Jerusalem, it is also true for each of us. It should have been a very special ‘day’ for Israel when Jesus did present Himself as the Messiah, as prophesied by the prophet Daniel. Jesus held them accountable and said: ‘If only now you had known those things that are of your peace, if even in this your day! But now these things are hidden from your eyes’ (Luke 19:42).

Real peace was promised to Judah, and Jacob mentioned this peace when he blessed all his sons. He said of Judah:

‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be’ (Gen. 49:10).

Shiloh refers to Jesus' rightful rule and authority. The resurrected Christ is the only Shiloh, shalom or peace, to be the eternal ruler descending from Judah. The phrase ‘Shiloh comes’ has a gematria of 358, and it corresponds to the gematria of the word ‘Messiah’. The general opinion is

that the word Shiloh is tied to the ‘Prince of Peace’. Christ will come to bring real peace on earth. The Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah. In both Psalms 108:8 and 60:7, our Lord is seen as the ‘Lawgiver’ or Governor, and He will decree the laws. The sceptre of Genesis 49:10 can either be a rod, staff, a tribe or a lawgiver. Both the rod and the staff do hint at procreation. From the risen Christ will develop a multitude of people to finally enter the new creation. However, the Messiah has His roots in Judah, and all of Israel’s promises will be fulfilled in Him.
When Shiloh or the Messiah came, He was snubbed by the Jewish nation, and thus the sceptre departed from them, and it rested solely in the hands of the King of Kings or the resurrected Christ. He is the Lawgiver, and we will sit at His feet. From the beginning of Jesus’s ministry, there were hordes of people who heard Him preach, and they saw His miracles. They witnessed His death and were converted to Christ. Sadly, a door closed for the Jewish nation when they forsook Him, but miraculously another door opened. The ‘lost sheep’, or the real firstborn of Israel, did accept Him.
Jesus continued, saying their enemies would set up a barricade around them and hem them in on every side. They would tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. Their enemies would not leave one stone upon another because they did not know the time of their visitation (19:43-44). Later in the chapter, the Apostle Luke says once Jerusalem is surrounded by a great army, then be alert and know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains (Petra), and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it (Luke 21:20-21). Early in the Church's history, the Romans did beleaguer Jerusalem, but unexpectedly they retreated, and Josephus the great historian wrote of this grand occasion. He said ‘unexpectedly, having no solid reason, the Romans withdrew their forces from Jerusalem to depart hurriedly! The Jews were very stunned as they were about to open their gates to surrender to the Roman armies. They couldn’t believe their eyes! Filled with courage, they pursued the retreating Roman armies, inflicting a major assault on them. The Christians inside Jerusalem did not celebrate the occasion but took the opportunity to flee to Petra, as they remembered the words of Jesus: “to flee Jerusalem”.’ Following this, there was a brief pause before the Roman armies returned with greater reinforcements to level Jerusalem to the ground. Wisely, during that ‘pause’, the Christians did flee Jerusalem to hide in the mountains (Matt. 24:15) to escape the fury of Jerusalem. Adam Clarke (1831) wrote: ‘Indeed it was a remarkable escape as not a single Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem.’ When the Roman armies did return to Jerusalem, Titus the new Emperor coaxed them to capture Jerusalem to loot all of its many treasures and the temple.
The ‘day’ when our Lord did descend down the Mount of Olives, riding on a colt, coincided with the end of Daniel’s 69th week. Real peace would have prevailed, but instead our Lord foretold the imminent destruction of Jerusalem. It will happen twice: once by the Romans, and again in the very near future, on the ‘Day of the Lord’.

When the Romans invaded Jerusalem, it was a foretaste of what will happen on that day. Once more, Jerusalem will be flattened when our Lord stands on the Mount of Olives. He will appear to disappear shortly afterwards, and He will not enter the eastern gate of Jerusalem. No, all the walls of Jerusalem will be levelled to the ground.
Before that awful day, a mighty army from the north with many alliances will barricade Jerusalem for 3½ years. The fences Israel is presently constructing to protect them from the Palestinian people will be used against them to isolate them from the outside world.
The 'Day of the Lord' will climax on the day when Daniel's 70th week ends.
Zechariah 12:1-4 says: 'On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the Mount moving to the north and the other half moving south. '
On the Day of the Lord, Christ will stand on the Mount. Zechariah 14 is in the making, and it will be fulfilled once Jerusalem is plundered by their enemies. God Himself will employ the Russians and He will steer many other nations with them to capture and ransack Jerusalem. The great turnabout is when a remnant in Jerusalem will call on the Name of Jehovah. The previous verse says when it will happen.
'They shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, it is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God' (Zech. 13:9). Once a remnant does call on the Name of Jehovah, then Israel's enemies will become God's enemies, and the armies who were gathered by God will face God's fury. The unbelieving people will die in Jerusalem, but a remnant will escape when Christ stands on the Mount of Olives. The mountain will split in two, from north to south, to create an enormous valley, a path to lead the remnant to Petra. Since the time of Christ, it did not happen; thus, this prophecy is in the making.
At the end of Daniel's 69th week, the disciples thought the kingdom of Christ would commence. We too need to be patient, knowing that Christ's kingdom will commence on earth on the last day of Daniel's 70th week. It will be either on the 10th Nissan or on the 10th Tishri to culminate with the Day of the Lord and Zechariah 14.
God's punishment will commence with Jerusalem, and the city will be devastated – not a popular Christian viewpoint. Howbeit, a believing remnant will escape, but the others will die.
Zechariah 14 was written after the Jewish nation returned from the Babylonian captivity, and once we have the same conditions – the unbelieving Jewish nation in Israel, as before the Babylonian captivity – we will have the same outcome. History keeps repeating itself. What happened during the Babylonian captivity was replicated by the Romans, and today Israel's final destruction is in the making.
Rightfully, the scribes argued, saying when the Messiah comes, no one will know where He is from (John 7:27). The scribes knew the place from whence He was to come (Matt. 2:4), and likewise did the Jews. They knew He would come from Bethlehem, and He would be the seed of David, to be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). The scribes were puzzled, and they thought

they had an invincible argument against Jesus being the Messiah. Their argument is Zechariah 14. They knew when the Messiah appears, He will come from heaven and not Bethlehem. In a sense, they were correct but lacked wisdom. They did not know how to separate the events of Jesus' first return to earth and His final return on the Day of the Lord. Christ will return from heaven to touch down on the Mount of Olives.
Daniel's 69th week ended at the Mount of Olives, and Daniel's 70th week will also end at the Mount of Olives.
'On that day, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. The Mount will split to the north and south, creating a wide valley running from east to the west. The believing remnant from Jerusalem will flee through the valley, for it will reach across to Azal (Petra). They will flee as you did from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all His holy ones (Church) with Him' (Zech. 14:1-5).
The Mount of Olives is to the east of Jerusalem, and in the Bible the east always portrays the origin as if it is coming from God.

- The wise men from the east also brought gold, and frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:11). They were led by the star.
- The Babylonian Empire did invade Jerusalem from the east, as they were sent by God.

Our Lord too wanted to enter Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives to claim His kingdom, but the unbelieving Jewish nation prevented Him, as detailed by the Apostle Luke.
After the devastation of Jerusalem, that city will be rebuilt while the antichrist is seated at Babylon. There is a 33-year period between the Day of the Lord – when Christ visits Israel – and Armageddon, when God reckons with the unbelieving world. Throughout the 33-year period, Christ's kingdom will prosper, and then the world needs to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Generally speaking, Christians today do not believe in the restoration of Israel, thinking all the blessings of Israel are harvested by the Church today. No, how wrong – Christ will rule the world from Jerusalem, and He will secure it. Throughout the last 33 years of the great tribulation, Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and then the believers need to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6). True peace will ensue once Israel repents as a nation; but it's not today.

The Mount of Olives in the Bible
Both Bethphage and Bethany are placed on the foothills of the Mount of Olives. This chapter commences with Bethphage (where the donkey was) and Mary and Martha lived with their brother Lazarus (who was resurrected from the dead) at Bethany. There Mary anointed Jesus's feet.
The Mount of Olives is mentioned when King David fled from Absalom. In King David's eyes, Absalom did nothing wrong. King David was rebuked by his own people as his judgements were not fair. Absalom declared himself king as he wanted righteous decrees in Israel. He epitomises the laws of Moses during our dispensation of grace, and King David epitomises the saving grace of Christ. According to Israel, King David was too compassionate. There was some discord, to portray the uneasiness that exists today between the Church, who favours grace, and those who

refuse grace to be yoked again by the law. It saddened King David immensely. We too have to choose – either grace or the law.
After Absalom declared himself king, David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and he wept as he ascended the Mount of Olives; he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up.
When Jesus left from the Last Supper to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, He essentially traced these same steps as King David. In light of all the facts, it is almost certain that the tears David shed as he climbed Olivet were rather those of humiliation and shame, rather than those of self-centred regret. Some will dare to say that God let David off easy – that he deserved the death penalty for adultery and murder. If God forgave him and spared David that penalty, surely David would just do it again. Those who think this are steeped in the law and in no way do they understand how grace and forgiveness works in the heart of the redeemed.
King David in his humiliation left Jerusalem via Gethsemane. He crossed the Kedron Valley barefoot and went to the feet of the mountain. In the last week of Jesus's life – He followed the same route daily, but He was crucified at Golgotha (west of Jerusalem) by the law-abiding Jewish people. Similarly, King David had to flee Jerusalem to hide at the Mount of Olives. In the final week of our Lord's humiliation, He taught His disciples many truths on the Mount.
The Apostle Paul says we too need to go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. Heb. 13:13
We too will suffer the pangs of humiliation, and our sufferings are an opportunity to identify ourselves with Him. Phil. 1:29 To obey Him will be at the expense of our body and pride. Our flesh will bear the brunt and the humiliation. Christ's humiliation was a means to His glorification. Phil. 2 Christ's humiliation, and similarly David's humiliation, ended when he claimed His kingdom on earth. When Absalom died, it ended the final dominion of the law. King David mourned for a long period of time and many long chapters say this. David never spoke a wrong word about Absalom, even though his son did contest his throne. Absalom had long thick hair and it caused his death, hanging on a tree. He favoured the law, and it says he did nothing wrong; he is like the law that is good.
'We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.' 1 Tim. 1:8
Our weaknesses are exposed when we, as Absalom, try to deal with the law. Sadly, Absalom tried his and his life ended horribly. The law is good but once inside of us, we are doomed – we think we are safe but we are vulnerable. Jesus too was cursed by the law, leading to His crucifixion. The Law prompted the Jewish people to crucify Him.
King Saul's life was interlaced with the Law of Moses that was given to Israel. Saul's life started good and slowly it degraded, depicting the law as a curse. The Israelites favoured the law and a king to reign over them. Saul embodies the law with all its rules. When we study Saul's life, it epitomises the effect the law has on our bodies. King Saul had a humble childhood. When he was young, they had to seek him as he was hiding amongst the baggage. Then the people shouted: 'God save the king' – the

only time it’s mentioned in the Bible. 1 Sam. 10:24 Then he continued with his previous occupation. When the enemies entered the land, they called for Saul. It started well but eventually things got out of control. King David always regarded Saul as the anointed of the Lord, even though he knew his kingdom would be taken away from him. King Saul epitomises the law that is holy, good and righteous, but it got the upper hand of him. The Apostle Paul says that the law is dead, and it makes us feel miserable, doing the bad instead of the good. Rom. 7 In Hebrew, Saul is translated as the desired of God. Saul fulfilled the desires of the people, as the people desired Absalom. When King Saul died, the time of the law should have ended, but it didn’t.

Sadly, to say, Absalom portrays the establishment of the law during our dispensation when grace needs to rule. The teachings of the law are cunning and it’s upheld by nearly all the Church leaders.

When Absalom dies, it spells the final end of the law, and it culminates with the Day of the Lord, when Christ will return to Jerusalem.

When King David did return to Jerusalem, it pictures a new chapter in David’s life. On the Day of the Lord, Christ will commence His kingdom at Jerusalem. Once we grasp this, we can explain a tense situation between Judah and the other tribes of Israel. When King David did return to Jerusalem, the other tribes of Israel were sorely displeased.

‘Behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, “Why have our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away, and brought the king, and his household, over the Jordan, and all David’s men with him?” All the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, “Because the king is a close relative to us. ……The men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, “We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more claim to David than you. Why then did you despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king?” The words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.’ 2 Sam. 19:41-43

When King David returned to Jerusalem, it was solely arranged by the tribe of Judah. It happened before the two and the ten lost tribes of Israel severed ties. There was some discord, and it has a prophetic hint. David came from the tribe of Judah in the south of the country. He preferred the people of Judah, as they were his relatives. But the men of Israel were not happy about that. They said it was not fair. They had ten tribes in the north of the country. There were many more people in Israel than in Judah. Also, Israel wanted David to be the king of the whole country.

In the near future when our Lord will return to Jerusalem, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Obviously, the Jewish people are the first to repent, the first to be blessed by Christ’s kingdom on earth and not the ten lost tribes of Israel. It will commence with Judah, but the repentance of the ten lost tribes of Israel will follow soon. When King David did return to Jerusalem, it depicts the jealousy that exists between Judah and the other tribes of Israel. Christ’s kingdom on earth will commence with Judah and not the ten lost tribes of Israel, who are scattered throughout the world. Rightfully, the other tribes of Israel asked Judah why not us, as rightfully they carry the title of Israel.

Today the Jewish nations are jealous of the ten lost tribes of Israel or the

Church, as they are blessed and not them. After the rapture of the Church, then the ten lost tribes of Israel will be jealous of the Jewish nation, as they are the first to repent and King David's throne will be erected at Jerusalem.

King Solomon loved many foreign women and the first of King Solomon's women is Pharaoh's daughter, and God forbade the Israelites to intermingle with the Egyptians. The mere fact that King Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter is to prove that Israel formed an alliance with Egypt, and they were interlaced with the Phoenicians. Additionally, Solomon took many other foreign wives of the various Canaanite tribes and many of these alliances are perceived to have been treaties. Despite the fact that God sent many warnings, Solomon did not repent and he persisted in collecting wives and mistresses. 1 Kings 11:4 says when Solomon was old, his many wives turned away his heart to follow the other gods.

1 Kings 11 ends on a sad note, a puzzling chapter in Solomon's life. For approximately 30 years, Solomon had faithfully served the Lord. Throughout chapters 1–10 we heard over and over again about the wisdom Solomon had, first in following the advice his father David gave him and he trusted the wisdom the Lord had given him. Dignitaries of nations throughout the world visited him, so what went wrong? After King Solomon turned away from God, he built pagan temples there for the gods of his foreign wives.

He had the world at his feet and had a covenant with all the kings, and his empire may have been the greatest of all.

God warned the people of Israel, telling them they must not marry foreign women as they will turn their hearts to their gods. On the Mount of Olives, he built a pagan shrine for the god of Moab, and another for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. God warned Solomon multiple times about worshipping other gods, but he did not listen. The chapter ended when God told Solomon that He will split his kingdom in two.

This division commenced on the Mount of Olives and there the unity of Israel was torn apart, to portray the beginning of our dispensation. The Davidic kingdom that was entrusted to King Solomon went to the Church; yes, it favoured the ten lost tribes of Israel, and not the Jewish nation. It is given to another nation. The pagan gods belonging to King Solomon blocked the way to Jerusalem. The entrances to the tabernacle and temple always faced eastward, thus the pagan gods prevented God from entering the temple. Both the words 'origin' and the word 'east' stem from the same Hebrew word. Wisdom and the wise men came from the east. Mt. 2:1 Lightning striking from the east is likened to Christ's Second Coming. Mt. 24:27

Several years later King Josiah went to see the temple, and then it was not a beautiful sight to see. He was horrified to find it nearly in ruins. The saddest thing was in God's temple there were many idols of wood and stone. Josiah tore down the altars, desecrating the pagan shrines east of Jerusalem. 2 Kings 23:13-14

Ezekiel was taken captive during the Babylonian captivity. His Book opens dramatically with a vision he saw at the River Chebar. Chebar is the same as Chabor or Habor, where the ten lost tribes of Israel had been taken

captive. 2 Kings 17:6; 1 Ch. 5:26 It flows into the Euphrates, two hundred miles north of Babylon. Ezekiel is absorbed with the history of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Ezekiel had vivid visions, enough to arrest anyone's attention. While Ezekiel was amongst the exiles by the River Chebar, the heavens were opened and in a vision he had a glimpse of God or the Cherubim. In the Hebrew it is easy to notice that the word Cherubim and the river Chebar are anagrams. An anagram is a type of word play, the result of rearranging the letters of a word to create a new word, using all the original letters only once. Both the words Chebar and cherubs are not translated in our English Bible. It is the original Hebrew word that has come down through all the ages. We cannot find the literal meaning of this word by studying the dictionary. The Hebrew letters for the word 'cherub' (Strong's no. 3742) is כְּרוּב or 2-200-20. The similarities of this anagram centre on the concept of the firstborn. The risen Christ is the true Firstborn. The twofold blessings of the firstborn are locked in the numbers 2-20-200. The firstborn has special entitlements and privileges and his inheritance cannot be shared. The throne of God is flanked by the four Cherubim. The four countenances of the Cherubim have their counterpart in the four Gospels.

The Lion is the King – Matthew

The ox is the servant – Mark

Man – Our Lord portrayed as man in the Gospel of Luke

The eagle is the Son of God in heaven as in the Book of John.

Now, in the Book of Revelation we will recognise the great similarities to what John saw. John too saw four living creatures, and they resembled Ezekiel's vision. Initially we may ask what the Cherubim are and the first verse in the Book of Ezekiel gives us a clue. As Ezekiel watches the visions, he sees the glory of God departing from the temple in Jerusalem, leaving the inner court and moving to the outer court, and then rising and moving out to the Mount of Olives; to finally rise from there.

Of course, this prophecy was fulfilled when our Lord moved out of the temple, down across the Kidron Valley, to ascend the Mount of Olives, to go to the Garden of Gethsemane. And later, after the crucifixion and the resurrection, He ascended from that mountain into glory.

The history of the ten lost tribes of Israel will commence once Christ's kingdom departs from Jerusalem to be settled at the Mount of Olives, and today it happened and it is known as the time of the Church. We are deemed the real firstborn in Christ, endowed with special entitlements and privileges. God sent Ezekiel with a special task to minister to the ten lost tribes of Israel.

'Those to whom also He showed Himself alive, after He had suffered, by many signs for forty days when He was appearing to them, and He spoke about the Kingdom of God.' Acts 1:3

In the Bible, Christ appeared 12 times to His followers after His resurrection, beginning with Mary and also the 500 brethren. He spent 40 days and 40 nights on earth – encouraging His disciples and teaching them. He walked through doors. He appeared and disappeared.

My question is: which signs did Christ do after His resurrection from the dead? He did miracles, but the greatest sign He did is when He ascended

into heaven, as His ascension is a sign of His eminent return for the Jewish nations on the Day of the Lord. Let me explain:
I believe when Christ resurrected from the dead, He ascended the same morning to heaven. As proof: early in the morning when Christ rose from the dead, Mary was not allowed to touch Him. The reason is as yet Christ did not ascend into heaven to be with His Father. A few hours later in the afternoon they were allowed to touch Him. Jn. 20:17, 20 Even doubting Thomas was allowed to touch His wounds. In the morning of His resurrection, He went to the third heaven, to return in the afternoon as the Glorified.
It was no novelty when Christ ascended up into heaven 40 days later. On that day the disciples gathered around Him asking: Acts 1:6-11 Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He told them it is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. They were left in the lurch and our Lord did not disclose to His disciples if His second coming to earth was imminent or not; no, they had to wait for the response of their Jewish leaders or the Sanhedrin on the day of Pentecost. It became apparent that the Jewish nations did not welcome Him, and therefore we have the 2000-year delay.
Our Lord says when His kingdom commences, it will start at Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria and the ends of the world. It happened since the day of Pentecost. It will be a sign of things to come or what will happen in the near future on the Day of the Lord. Then He will claim His rightful throne when He places His feet on the Mount of Olives. His kingdom will commence at Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria (ten lost tribes of Israel) and finally the ends of the earth. By the end of the great tribulation, every person on earth will be reached.
The one sign is how the Gospel will spread throughout the world, and the other sign is how He departed from earth to go to heaven. He will appear in like manner, placing His feet on the same spot.
40 days after His resurrection, He did not enter the heavens for the first time, but He ascended as a sign of what will happen in the near future. Earlier in the morning, the disciples asked so many questions – and what better way to explain to them than via signs. He ascended to heaven to reveal in what manner He will return on the Mount of Olives.
LAST SIGN
As He ascended with the sound of a trumpet, Ps. 47:5 likewise He will descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, to come down unexpectedly, on the very same spot from where they saw Him leave. Why did the two men say: ‘Ye men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven?’ The reason is the message of Christ is entrusted to them and not the Jewish people. The first three Gospels are mainly taken up with our Lord's public ministry at Galilee. It is noteworthy that 19 of His 32 parables were spoken in Galilee. 25 of His 33 great miracles were done at Galilee. His first miracle was wrought at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, and one of his last, after his resurrection, on the shores of Galilee's sea. At Galilee He called His first disciples.
Mark 11:9-10
And those that went before and those that followed cried out, saying,

Hosanna; Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord; 10 blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.
This history should be studied in the light of Matthew 21 and the other Gospels, as the parable of the tenants is coupled with Jesus descending from the Mount of Olives.
The Parable of the Wicked Tenants describes the history of the Jewish people as God sees them. He revealed precisely what was going to happen to them: the nation was going to reject Him, and because of their rejection, God will transfer the responsibility of the kingdom to other people.
The parable is found in Matthew 21:33-46, Mark 12:1-12 and Luke 20:9-19.
A man who had a plot of land on which he decided to plant grapevines. After the planting, he built a fence around it, dug a wine press and erected a watch tower. Then he rented his vineyard and went away on a journey for an extended period of time. In his absence, the tenants would take care of the vineyard and they were expected to give a certain percentage of the crop as their annual rent.
When the harvest time approached, the landowner sent his servants to collect the income of the vineyard. But the tenants had no intention of paying anything to the master. At the arrival of the master's servants, the tenants grabbed them, beating, killing and stoning them. Later the landowner sent more servants with the same request. And the tenants received them in the same manner as the predecessors. As a last resort, the landowner sent the one person he had left, his son. He was playing his last card. He thought the tenants would recognise his authority once they are confronted by his son. ‘They will respect my son,’ he thought. That did not happen. The tenants killed the son to secure the vineyard for themselves. Then the owner himself returned, and he was very patient until then. He killed the tenants and appointed other tenants to care for the vineyard.
The tenants were also trying to use the law to favour them. If they could show, for example, that the vineyard was unfruitful and therefore that they could not produce any fruit to give to the owner, they had reason to justify their actions. They planned to kill the heir in a sort of ‘legalised’ way. For example, they could claim that the son arrived with a body of men to forcefully evict them from the vineyard without any legal proceedings. They had no excuse to kill the son. The vineyard was very well laid out as it was fenced in; he dug a winepress in it and he built a tower to guard and protect the vineyard from the thieves.
There is a close parallel between this parable and the vineyard Isaiah was talking about. ‘My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.’ Isa. 5:1-2
He denied His vineyard absolutely nothing. When it was harvest time, the vineyard did not yield good grapes, only sour ones. The vineyard here

represents the Jewish people. It is explicitly identified in Isaiah 5:7 as the ‘house of Judah’ and the ‘men of Judah’.
Jesus explained when God chose the Jewish people to be His people, He desired some fruit from them, some spiritual fruit. The servants represent the prophets that God sent to the Jews and some of them had been beaten, Jer. 20:2 some were killed, Neh. 9:26 and stoned. 2 Chron. 24:21 This is unfortunately the way the Jews treated the servants of God. At that moment in time, the Jewish people were about to reject and kill Jesus, the Son of God.
We read in v. 45, ‘Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they knew it was directed against them.’ They killed the prophets, involving the nation as a whole.
When we look closely at the use of the word ‘vineyard’ in the parable, we realise that it represents something else – not just the nation of Jewish people. What else does it represent? It represents the kingdom of God. We need to compare verses 41 with 43. ‘They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. ”’ 21:41 ‘Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.’ 21:43
The two verses express the same idea. The main difference is that the word ‘vineyard’ (v. 41) is replaced by the expression ‘the kingdom of God’ (v. 43). By this simple comparison, you can see that the vineyard represents the kingdom of God. The vineyard that the landowner planted in the parable is the kingdom of God.
This story tells us that our Lord is looking for fruit, and we as His people need to bear fruit. You cultivate a vineyard to expect some fruit.
Jesus saw the Jewish people as God's chosen tenants, with a responsibility to produce fruit for their master. However, they failed totally by rejecting the ‘son of the owner’. As a result, the responsibility of the vineyard was given to another nation, a people who will produce the fruit of it.
Who could that nation be? Are they the Church? At that moment in time, the Church was not formed and it’s difficult to address the Church who was not even mentioned. The other nation our Lord is talking about are the ten lost tribes of Israel, who are presently scattered amongst the nations of the world. They will seek the Lord and bear much fruit.
It’s impossible to study Romans 9, 10 & 11 if we reject the notion of the ten lost tribes of Israel or Lo-Ammi. Hosea frequently mentions the word Ammi and Lo-ammi, and since the Assyrian captivity when the lost tribes of Israel disappeared, they are known as Lo-Ammi. It’s clear from the Apostle Paul that the people who were previously known as Lo-ammi (heathen nations) became God’s people.
When Paul says the blessings are taken from the Jewish people and given to the heathen, then it went from the two to the ten. They are receptive to the Gospel. Judah yielded no fruit but Ephraim did via the Church.
The daughter of Jairus (2) who died pictures Judah and the haemorrhagic woman (10) who got healed are the ten tribes of Israel.
The donkey (2) is Judah and the colt, the lost tribes of Israel (10).
It’s not Jerusalem (2) but the Mount of Olives (10). Interestingly we notice

there is a hidden parable within a parable. We can easily tie verse 41 with verse 43 when our Lord speaks of the tenants, not noticing verse 42, when He speaks of the ‘Stone’.
‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. ’
It opens a brand new can of worms, as it is a direct translation of Psalm 118, tying the ‘Stone’ to the word Hosanna.
The ‘Stone’ is mentioned frequently in the Bible and we who are part of the Church have a solid foundation, built on the ‘Stone’ who is none other than Christ Himself. Eph. 2:19-20 He is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last stone, holding everything together.
The Pyramid at Giza has many interesting facets, and one of them is that the headstone is missing. The top of the pyramid is flat and it is not pointed as all the other pyramids around it. The capstone has never been placed on it. The pyramid is the symbol of the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Capstone. All the corners of the pyramid come together in the Head Stone. There is no other building design other than the pyramid where all the corners of the building come together in one stone. Today the Pyramid at Giza is not complete, as the Body of Christ is not complete. At the time of the rapture, the Church is complete and then, typologically, the capstone will be placed on the pyramid. Upon the day of His resurrection, He became the first stone, and He will be the last stone with the rapture of the Church. Both the houses of Israel will unite in the Cornerstone, Jesus Christ.
The Apostle Peter knew the Scriptures when he condenses three Old Testament verses regarding the stone.
‘Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the Head of the Corner, and the Stone of Stumbling and the Rock of Offence.’ 1 Pet. 2:6-8

- Isaiah says: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.’ Isa. 28:16
- ‘The stone which the builders refused is become the Headstone of the corner.’ Ps. 118:22
- ‘And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it.’ Isa. 8:14-15

When we consider all the different denominations today, they all have one thing in common, and that is Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone. As long as we talk about Jesus, we have fellowship with them. The separation comes when we speak of the resurrected Christ operating in our lives; then He becomes the Rock of offence and they are offended and separate themselves from us.
‘This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders which is become the head of the corner.’ Acts 4:11
The phrase ‘set at naught’ means ‘to treat with contempt and despise’. Peter was speaking to the High Priests, Annas & Caiaphas, along with the

elders and scribes; the religious leaders of Jesus' time. The religious leaders viewed the Stone with contempt. It is not much different today.
‘This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.’ 21:42; 118:23
Indeed it’s marvellous, hiding the utmost truths concerning our calling. Our mystery is not to be ranked with the common and well-known events that are easily explained; it is beyond reasoning and it cannot be explained by any human reasoning. Psalm 118
‘This is the day which the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.’ v. 24
The word ‘day’ in the Bible has a special meaning denoting judgement, not only in the Hebrew or in the Greek language, but also in the English language. ‘Day’ presupposes that things are brought to light, so we can discern our deeds. The New Testament does speak of the many things that will be punished once the light appears. The ‘day of Christ’ means the judgement of Christ. The ‘day of the Lord’ has far greater implications for Israel, and it will involve all the nations of the world. In fact the day of the Lord will commence from the second half of Daniel's 70th week, when all the nations surround Israel, and it ends once the Millennium commences. The Apostle Paul also speaks of this judgement when he says: ‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord?’ Rom. 11:33-34
His path is difficult to follow. He did not follow the direct path to Jerusalem, but He followed a different route, leading Him to the Gentile nations or the ten lost tribes of Israel. It is like the detour we previously spoke of when our Lord rode on the colt. Jacob too went via Luz (Bethel) to return with a family 20 years later. The route our Lord chose involves the Church, a route not masterminded by Judah but Ephraim.
‘Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success!’ v. 25
I am certain Jesus’ disciples recited these verses when He descended down the Mount of Olives. They cried: ‘Hosanna’ to the son of David. Hosanna is a frequently used word found in many great old hymns, but do we understand what we are singing about?
The word ‘hosanna’ is the same word as ‘save us’ and is compounded from two original Hebrew words (hoshiya + na') used only once in Ps. 118:25. Wherever the word ‘hosanna’ occurs in the New Testament, it remains ‘hosanna’, as it is a transliteration of the original Hebrew word. Psalm 118:25 is a cry to God for help. The mere sight of Jesus riding on a colt, coupled with the disciples spreading and waving of branches, are reminiscent of the ceremonial branches which had come to characterise the Feast of Tabernacles, and unwittingly they greeted the true David, the true Son of David.
Each year, Psalm 118 is recited at the Feast of Tabernacles and the last day of that feast was called ‘the great Hosanna’. Note the branches were also called hosannas. The expression ‘Hosanna in the highest!’ is more mysterious. Suggestions have it that the phrase means ‘Up with your branches!’ The ‘lulabs’, or the bundles made of branches of palm trees, boughs of willow and myrtle, are tied with the name ‘Hosanna’. The occasion would have been greater if our Lord descended down the Mount

of Olives six months later, to culminate with the Feast of Tabernacles. There is a divine plan as the Passover addresses the issues regarding Christ's redemptive work, His death and resurrection.
Jesus' future return to earth will culminate with the Feast of Tabernacles. When Jesus did descend down the Mount of Olives to enter into Jerusalem, it was done publicly, in view of everyone at Jerusalem. It would have been an ideal 'coronation' of Jesus as the King of Israel. On Palm Sunday no one was under any compulsion. The nation had a clear choice to make and likewise its rulers. The Romans did nothing to interfere. The priests stood by and watched it all happen. Every man had a choice to make that day. Jesus called for a decision and the nation rendered its verdict.
He deliberately challenged the religious leaders. This set in motion the official plot that led to His arrest, trial and crucifixion. The Jewish leaders had decided not to arrest Him during the feast. We call this event 'the triumphal entry', but no Roman would have used that term. An official 'Roman Triumph' was indeed something to behold! When a Roman general came back to Rome after a complete conquest of an enemy, he was welcomed home with an elaborate official parade. Our Lord's 'triumphal entry' was nothing like that; it ended in tears.

Mark 11:11
And the Lord entered into Jerusalem and into the temple; and when he had looked around upon all things, and it being now late, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.
We are creatures of 'time', and constantly we look at our watches. God is not tied to our dimension of time as He sees things differently. The Scriptures make a clear distinction between the 'temporal' and the 'eternal'. Paul says the things we see today are 'temporal' but the things not seen are 'eternal'. 2 Cor. 4:18 'Time' cannot restrict God, but we are caught in its net.
We need to study the Gospel of Luke and then we will discover there was a 'gap' between verses 10 and 11, and the Apostle Mark is silent about this. For a reason we have four Gospels and we need to compare them constantly to grasp the backdrop. According to Luke, it is obvious that our Lord was rejected after He descended down the Mount of Olives, and after He crossed the Kidron Valley, there was no triumphant entry for Him into Jerusalem.
The Bible was never written in the correct time order. There are many instances in the Bible when unaware we step from one moment in time to the other. There are many classic examples:
• Daniel's 70th week. At one moment Daniel portrays Jesus' rejection and in the same breath he speaks of Christ's return. Dan. 9:24-27 Unnoticed there is a 2000-year gap.
• Isaiah 61:1-2, when our Lord read the Scriptures in the synagogue, he read from the Old Testament to later close the Book. He read the two verses: 'To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' The Lord did not read the last half of verse 2b: 'and the day of vengeance of our God', as it concerns a different time. There is a hidden time gap of 2000 years. In a sense, the marking of time is irrelevant to God because He transcends it.

Many Christians think the Bible is written in an easily recognisable time frame, but it's not.

• Isaiah 11 is a confusing chapter as it reverts back and forth to different time zones. It commences with Christ's resurrection from the dead (v. 1) then our current dispensation of grace (v. 2, 3). Then Isaiah addresses a type when Israel enters the great tribulation (v. 4) followed by the Millennium on earth (v. 5) to finally enter a new creation (v. 6-9). Verse 10 reverts back to the Millennium. 'That day' commenced with the 'day of the Lord' and it will continue until the 'last day'. The 'day' exemplifies Christ's reign on earth. Verses 11 and 12 revert to an earlier time when all of Israel will accept Christ. It prophesies the end of Daniel's 70th week, when the ten lost tribes of Israel who are scattered in the world will be gathered at Zion.

• Isaiah 24:21-23 relates to three different time zones in God's calendar. God mentioned the 'last day' first, as it is the foremost event on God's agenda (v. 21) then He speaks of the time when Satan is loosed at the end of the Millennium (v. 22) to finally end with the 'Day of the Lord'.

• Similarly from 1 Thessalonians 4:14 to 5:5, we find there is a constant shuffling in time between the rapture of the Church and the Day of the Lord. They are 7 years apart. It commences with a time when Christ will return on the Day of the Lord, to accompany those who have fallen asleep hundreds of years ago (4:14). On the Day of the Lord, the Church will accompany Him. Verse 15 is the rapture of the Church. Verse 16 commences with the Day of the Lord when He will descend with the sound of trumpets – to place His feet on the Mount of Olives. Then from verse 16b onwards, the chapter speaks of the rapture, when the dead and reborn Christians will be swept to heaven. 1 Thessalonians 5 speaks solely of the Day of the Lord, 7 years after the rapture.

The kingdom of God will surface, but not in a way the world expects it to be. There are many interruptions in God's salvation plan and it's not obvious when we only study this chapter. Mark 11 should be read alongside the other Gospels. There is a great 'gap' of 2000 years and somehow the Old Testament prophets must have figured it out. They knew when Jesus appeared on earth, His people would refuse Him, resulting in the formation of the Church. David and the many prophets were mindful of Israel's unbelief, aware there would be a delay or a detour before the final kingdom of Christ is revealed on earth. There is a delay between the Mount of Olives and when Christ rules at Jerusalem. Peter said the prophets of the Old Testament wanted to know more about the salvation that is known to us. They searched them. 1 Pet. 1:10, 11 It says Christ must suffer first and then enter into His glory. As the prophets looked into the future, they knew God was up to something – they didn't know what it entailed, oblivious of the blessings we now enjoy. Somehow they knew there was a period between His suffering and the glory to follow. Our Lord felt humiliated as His mission ended at the Mount of Olives. Daniel prophesied saying after the 69th week, the Messiah will be cut off and have no kingdom. Each morning Jesus left the Mount of Olives to go to the Temple and every night He returned to spend at Bethany. His mission on earth ended on the Mount of Olives. Jerusalem will be destroyed and He

will be ‘cut off’ from Jerusalem. On the Day of the Lord, Christ will commence His kingdom placing His feet on the Mount of Olives, but in the following 33 years after the battle of Armageddon, His kingdom will be firmly placed at Jerusalem.
He came to His own, and His own did not accept Him, and the Mount of Olives does portray the truths pertaining to the Church today, as we too are placed outside Jerusalem. Heb. 13:13 On the Day of the Lord, He will return with the ‘donkey’ and then the donkey is the Church.
Bethany is on the other side of the Mount of Olives and Bethany translated in Hebrew says ‘He is the house’. It is the house belonging to Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Lazarus was resurrected from the dead and he portrays Eleazar the son of Aaron, his real firstborn.

Mark 11:12-14
And the next day when they left Bethany, he was hungry, 13 and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything upon her; but when he came to her, he found nothing but leaves, for the time of figs was not yet. 14 Then Jesus, answering, said to the fig tree, Never again shall anyone eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.
The big question of the chapter is why would Jesus curse a fig tree that did not have figs on it, especially since the text says that ‘it was not the season for figs’? To curse a fig tree for not bearing fruit in early spring is like cursing a dog who cannot speak. From the time of Passover, it took about six weeks before you can eat figs. Remember the early unripe fruit appears even before the spring leaves on its branches, often before Passover. When Jesus approached the fig tree, He had every reason to suspect that something edible would be on it. The tree appeared to be fruitful, but it offered nothing to the weary travellers.
Why did Jesus curse the tree? The barren fig tree seems to portray the conceited Pharisees in Jerusalem. The cursing of the fig tree symbolises God’s judgement on the Jewish nations for not bearing the fruit He wanted from the people. The trees that do not bear good fruit will be cut down and the fig tree deserved to be destroyed. Any human who does not bear fruit for God will be ‘destroyed’.
When Jesus examined the fig tree it is likened to Him examining the attitude of the people in Israel. He visited them and found no fruit on them – it looked promising, but it fooled the eye. He expected fruit and He left disheartened. Similarly, when He descended down the Mount of Olives on a donkey, He expected a warm reception, but they rejected Him. The history of our Lord stalled at the Mount of Olives and his kingdom did not progress to Jerusalem. It was Passover (not the time for the figs) and he had to wait for the Feast of the Tabernacles when it was the known time of the figs. It seems as if everything was premature and unplanned – Was it? Many think our Lord felt despondent, sitting down having His hands in His hair – asking what next, and did He plan a new strategy? No, everything is pre-planned and nothing happened unexpectedly. God foreknew if the Jewish nation did not respond to His call, then another people will. The Jews refused Christ and thus the Word of God went to the heathen nations

and amongst them is scattered a people who will respond to His message, and we know who they are. Even in Paul’s time it says that the Gospel was preached to every creature under heaven. Col. 1:23 Christ’s message went to the complete world and some nations did react more readily and they are the Anglo-Saxons. It stuck to them like the wet sand to our feet, as they proved to be more receptive. Unbeknown to the world they belong to Israel, and the firstborn blessings of Ephraim are bestowed on them. It is the greatest blessing God will ever bestow on any human flesh. For us it is Passover and not the Feast of the Tabernacles; we are bridged between Daniel's 69th and his 70th week.
The Apostle Paul is clear about this:
‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (To bear fruit) In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.’ Eph. 1:3-5 When Eve and Adam sinned, their eyes were opened and they felt uncomfortable being naked. Since then they clothed themselves with fig leaves and the fig tree does symbolise our earthly blessings. Each autumn they lose their leaves to be covered again at spring. Similarly we too constantly need new pairs of clothing. The Bible students today agree that the fig tree is a symbol of the Jewish nation. They will always be an example to the other nations of the world and whatever happens to them will also implicate the other nations of the world. The fig tree with its many leaves will be doomed. We read of Zacchaeus who tried to see our Lord. He climbed up a sycamore or fig tree beside the road to have a better view of Him. He was nonetheless noticed by our Lord and was told to hurriedly climb down the tree with all its leaves! He had to abandon the tree or the Jewish nation and religion, and that night our Lord visited him at his house. Luke 19:2-6 We too need to climb from the tree to solely rely on the blessings we received in Christ. God clothed Adam and Eve with animal skins. Gen. 3:21 We can decide to be either clothed with fig leaves (our works) or to allow God to clothe us.
When our Lord cursed the tree, He cursed Israel.
Our Lord cursed them earlier:
‘Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. ”’ Luke 13:35 This chapter rumours the visit of some Pharisees who warned Jesus of Herod’s death threat against Him. We don’t know the Pharisees’ motives for warning Jesus, but given their opposition, perhaps they wanted to use Herod’s threat to scare Jesus out of Galilee (Herod’s jurisdiction) to go to Jerusalem, where they could deal with Him.
But whatever their motives, Jesus’ reply shows that He knew where He was going and what He had to accomplish. He was moving steadily toward the cross and He would not be deterred by the threats of Herod or the Pharisees. He was angered saying the unbelieving Jews are dumb and blind. The veil of the Talmud that hangs and covers the eyes of the Pharisees is double the weight of the veil that covered Moses’ face. It ends

with the encouraging word Hosanna – ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’.
‘Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Baal-peor, and consecrated themselves to the thing of shame, and became detestable like the thing they loved.’ Hos. 9:10
Two Hebrew words in this verse remind us of the firstborn blessings of the Church. They are the original Hebrew words for ‘first fruits’ and the ‘first season’. God’s delight is in the formation of the Church. The main subject of the Book of Hosea is the ten lost tribes of Israel and they are named 73 times in the Book of Hosea (Israel and Ephraim) but only mentions Judah 15 times. The ten lost tribes of Israel are the first to share in the blessings of the resurrected Christ and not Judah, as we are the first ripe fruits on the fig tree, the most valued. Today an archway to Baal is erected at Trafalgar Square, to prove that the bulk of Israel did choose Baal. They consecrated themselves to that shameful idol, and they are not ashamed. The Hebrew words ‘they were separated’ alludes to the order of the Nazarites, who were in a peculiar sense set apart for God’s service; and they are the minority, the believers in Christ, but the bulk of the nation chose Baal to honour that filthy idol.
‘When I would gather them, declares the LORD, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them. They looked for peace, but no good came.’ Jer. 8:13, 15
The withering fig tree was prophesied by Jeremiah.
‘I saw two baskets of figs placed in front of the Lord’s Temple in Jerusalem. One basket was filled with fresh, ripe figs, while the other was filled with bad figs that were too rotten to eat. The good figs represent the exiles God sent from Judah to the land of the Babylonians. He will bring them back to build them up and not tear them down. I will plant them and not uproot them. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me wholeheartedly.’ Jer. 24:1-7
The fig tree will not be cursed forever, as it will bud soon to bear much fruit. Matthew 24 speaks of the fig tree that will bud again, as new shoots will reappear.
Luke 13:6-9
We read of a despondent vineyard owner who is very distressed as the fig tree did not bear any fruit. For 3 years he looked for fruit, but found nothing. The vineyard owner was perfectly justified to fell the tree and he was ready to axe the tree. However, we see the gardener pleading here for a little more time. As it turned out, Israel as a nation still did not believe, but a few believers did. The compassionate gardener intercedes for more time to water and fertilise the fruitless tree, and the gracious Lord of the vineyard responds in patience. The borrowed time is not permanent, as God's patience is limited. In this parable, the vineyard owner grants another year. In the same way, God in His mercy grants us another day, another hour but His patience will end. Luke 3:6-9 This is familiar – there is no fruit on the fig tree to be finally chopped down. The 4th year is the time of the law, and they had the promises made to

Abraham, but they did not bear any fruit.
When Jesus cursed the tree to never bear fruit again, He spoke indirectly to the unbelieving Jews, implying that Israel will not be able to exist or bear fruit as part of the old covenant. The tree will bud and bear new shoots, as its roots will be flooded by the living blood of the new covenant. The fig tree will bloom once Israel comes to faith. Mt. 24:32 In some newer translations Matthew 21:19 is translated as: 'May you never bear fruit again!' (NIV) However that is not an appropriate translation. There will nonetheless be new life in the tree once it is safely rooted in the new covenant – under the umbrella of Christ.
Upon the Day of the Lord, Israel will escape through the Mount of Olives to Petra. They will return to capture Jerusalem and rebuild it. With Israel's repentance, the fig tree will bud and new shoots will appear. When we study Matthew 24 and 25 we will discover another time of waiting (33 years) before the 12 tribes of Israel are fit to enter the Millennium. When they do, then the shoots will bear much fruit.
The vine endears the promises made to Abraham or eternal life. The life of the new covenant is likened to the fruit of the vine and the life of the new covenant are the promises made to Abraham. If its fruit are sweet, then the true fruit is Christ, as He alone is the true vine. Jn. 15:1 He declared to be the true vine on the night when He was betrayed. He is the true Jew and lawgiver, not of the old, but of the new covenant.
In the Bible, we often read of the fig and the vine tree together. There is even a fig tree planted in the vineyard, and it was hacked down. I believe in the new creation the vine will figuratively spread its branches in the fig tree as then total Israel (fig tree) will be reborn to allow the vine (the promises made to Abraham) to settle in its branches.

Mark 11:15 - 22
[15]And they come to Jerusalem, and Jesus, entering into the temple, began to cast out those that sold and bought in the temple and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those that sold doves [16]and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. [17]And he taught them, saying, Is it not written that my house shall be called house of prayer by all the nations? but ye have made it a den of thieves. [18]And the scribes and the princes of the priests heard it and sought how they might kill him, for they feared him because all the multitude was astonished at his doctrine. [19]But when evening was come, Jesus went out of the city. [20]And passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. [21]Then Peter, remembering, said unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou didst curse is withered away. [22]And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Have faith in God.
The shrivelled fig tree gave Jesus the opportunity to teach a lesson about what was about to happen to the Jewish nation. Indeed, for a reason, the fig tree and the cleansing of the Temple are cited together. The religious leaders feigned their religious ceremonies, and there was no 'fruit' on the tree; they were blessed with the Word of God but fruitless due to their unbelief. In fact, many of the Jews were poised to crucify their own

Messiah before the week was over. The shrivelled fig tree is a foretaste of the inevitable punishment upon Jerusalem.
The Temple during Jesus' time was not the first temple, built by Solomon, nor the second temple, rebuilt by the Jews returning from their Babylonian captivity. It was the third temple, known as 'Herod's Temple'. This temple was built by Herod, not so much to facilitate Israel's worship, but as an attempt to reconcile the Jews to King Herod.
The outer courts of the Temple were the only places where Gentiles could worship. They were not permitted in the inner courtyard belonging to the Jews. In Acts 21:27–30, they accused the Apostle Paul, thinking he had allowed a Gentile into the inner court. It would have been a serious offence, worthy of death.
The outer courts belonging to the Gentiles were packed with oxen, lambs, and doves—no place for the Gentiles to pray and worship God. It appears that Gentile worship was functionally prohibited, and I doubt it troubled the Jews; they were reluctant to encourage the Gentiles to share their temple. They valued their money, and foreign money was not allowed in the Temple. They benefitted from their exchange rate.
Many evangelical Christians prefer to be known as Zionists, believing that Christ's second coming will be heralded by a powerful Jewish state. They insist that the Jews remain God's chosen people until Christ's return, and they will set up Jerusalem to His liking. No, when our Lord returns, Jerusalem will be destroyed and all of Israel will die by the sword. A remnant will escape. Our Lord never had a good word to say concerning Judaism or the Talmud. They veered away from the laws of Moses, esteemed by Him. He said, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Matt. 5:18). He did not remark on the Talmud—the man-made version of the law that was created in Babylon, the mother of all harlots (Rev. 17:5). The Jewish leaders—namely the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Chief Priests, and the Sanhedrin—heckled and taunted Him as He preached to the people. Their purpose was to catch Him in heresy and blasphemy and eventually use it as evidence against Him at His trial (Lk. 20:19–26). Having entered the city, Jesus went to the Temple and vented His anger towards the people who used the Temple for their own personal needs. The merchants were buying and selling, changing money, and selling doves.
Jesus justified His action by quoting the Scriptures. The Temple should have been a house of prayer (Isa. 56:7), but they had made it a den of thieves (Jer. 7:11) or a house of merchandise (Jn. 2:16). I believe the Jewish nation was more focussed on the Talmud than on the laws of Moses. Jesus deliberately cited Jeremiah and Isaiah when He went into the Temple. He did so to explain His actions. The link to Jeremiah is extremely important because both Jesus and Jeremiah prophesied the same topic: the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, along with the horrifying slaughter of their inhabitants (Jer. 7). So we know Jesus was warning the Temple establishment that foreign armies would besiege and destroy the Temple and Jerusalem. Our Lord's advice was not to defend the city with a revolt, but to literally leave the city, heading for the hills (Mark 13:14).

But why didn't Jesus just say this? Why did He go to the extreme of overturning the tables and letting the animals go free? Cursing the fig tree and upheaving the Temple was to prophetically verify the prophecies Jeremiah made.

In Jeremiah 19, God tells Jeremiah to go to the gate overlooking the Valley of Hinnom, Gehenna. It was a valley where outcasts, thieves, and infected people were thrown when they died. It is wrongly translated as ‘hell’ by the KJV. There, Jeremiah symbolically shatters a ceramic jar. The shattered jar heralds the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies; then Jeremiah goes to the Temple and repeats the prophetic warning.

Jesus is doing the same thing: He told them to repent, because if they didn't, the same thing was going to happen to them! He wept because Jerusalem did not grasp the things that would secure peace for them.

Only in John 2 do we read that He fashioned a whip. What did He do with the whip? Perhaps one could say Jesus used force, but I wouldn’t accuse Him of violence per se. In addition, the Scripture does not say that He hit anyone (or even the animals, for that matter) with the whip. He may have just made a lot of noise, or perhaps He did use it to get the larger animals moving. Either way, I don’t see anything inconsistent with His teachings here.

Furthermore, nowhere in Scripture is the cleansing-of-the-Temple episode held up as an example that we are to imitate. Jesus is clearing out the Temple to demonstrate His zeal as the only begotten Son, visiting His Father’s house, to find the Jewish nation taking advantage of the innocent people. The cleansing of the Temple foreshadows its eventual destruction. It cannot be definitely proved that Jesus actually used violence against His enemies.

In fact, in John 2, after He uses the whip, the Temple authorities did not alert the Temple guard to restrain Jesus. There is no mention of the Temple police, as in Acts 21, when they arrested the Apostle Paul. Rather, the spectacle leads to a debate: the Jewish leaders argued with Him about His authority and asked Jesus for a sign. He tells them, ‘Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will rebuild it’ (Jn. 2:19). The Temple He was referring to was the Temple of His body (Jn. 2:21). Perhaps the whip in John 2 connects indirectly to the picture of Jesus' own body being flogged a few days later. Obviously, with the cleansing of the Temple, everyone did not leave, as Jesus starts to heal the blind and the lame, welcoming the children’s cheers (Mt. 21:14–16). The whip was merely a spectacle to alert their attention. The Temple was not cleansed, as they continued with their usual business.

The outer courts of the Temple were the only places where the Gentile people could worship God. They were not allowed to pass beyond a certain point. In Acts 21:27–30, they charged the Apostle Paul with allowing a Gentile into the inner courtyard of the Temple, where only the Jews were allowed. It was a serious offence, worthy of death.

If the outer courts belonging to the Gentiles were filled with oxen, lambs, and doves, there was no space for the Gentiles to pray and worship God. It appears that Gentile worship was functionally prohibited, and I doubt it troubled the Jews. They were reluctant to share ‘their God’ with the

Gentile nations. The annual tax levied on Jews was ½ shekel per male. The ½ shekel and shekel were not always used in everyday commerce, but were the only coins to be accepted at the Temple. The people used the outer court to exchange money. It sickened Jesus to hear them shouting or advertising their rates, so He threw over their tables.

The outer court must have smelled more like a barnyard than the place where one would seek God's company. The greed of the money-mongers is exposed in their dealings with the Gentiles. According to Deuteronomy 23:19–20, a Jew is not allowed to lend to a fellow Jew at interest, but may do business with the Gentile people at a handsome rate. It is justified in the Talmud. It permits the Jews to practise usury against Gentiles. The rules in the outer courtyard were totally different from the rules in the inner courtyard, where the Jews assembled. It was a grave offence to allow a Gentile into the inner court, worthy of death.

After Judas betrayed our Lord, he was filled with remorse, but he did not repent. Even though he knew what he had done by betraying innocent blood, he threw the money into the Temple—the 30 pieces of silver was the price for which Judas Iscariot had betrayed Jesus. He threw them into the inner court (Mt. 27:5), where only the priests were allowed to go. Judas wanted to implicate the priests in his crime. It was his way of saying, 'You too are guilty of this.

'It is commonly practised today, not by the Jews, but by our fellow believers. False teachers will make the Word merchandise and exploit the believers. They are greedy. The Apostle Peter warned us:

'But there also arose false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be maligned. In their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep' (2 Pet. 2:1–3).

Today, men want wealth, prosperity, and success. They want to be esteemed; they lust after power and authority. Call it the 'success and prosperity Gospel'. Call it anything you want, but do not call it the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They teach us to become rich to favour their pockets. Judgement and damnation await them. They prosper, becoming wealthier by the day. What God is doing behind the scenes is allowing them to heap up treasures for themselves here on earth, only to cement their own destruction. The Apostle Peter says they will bring swift destruction upon themselves (2 Pet. 2:1).

The word 'merchandise' in 2 Peter 2:3, in Greek, is 'emporeuomai', as in John 2:16, when Jesus overturned the tables of the merchants. James 4:13 translates it as 'to conduct business, to make money'.

Trade in the Bible is never looked upon positively. To use the Gospel to profit ourselves financially beyond our personal needs is condemned with no uncertainty. The greed of money caused the destruction of Tyre. Tyre was the mighty gateway to the sea, the trading centre of the world, but their greed made them fall (Ezek. 27:3).

The Temple should be a house of prayer, as cited by King Solomon when he inaugurated the Temple. King Solomon, as king, inaugurated the Temple and not the high priest. It portrays the truths of the new covenant. When we study this history, we need to notice the Temple was a house for His Name, and He did not live inside the Temple (1 Kings 8:27–30). God lives in heaven, and He is not dependent on us or the houses we build for Him. King Solomon built the Temple to be a house of prayer and also for the foreigner from distant lands (1 Kings 8:41). They did visit the Temple, but were cheated. The Temple is meant for all the nations of the world. ‘And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be His servants—everyone who keeps the Sabbath without profaning it and holds fast My covenant—these I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples’ (Isa. 56:6–7). During the Millennium, the complete world will visit Jerusalem and the Temple (Zech. 14:16). It is meant for all the world.

John 2 mentions the cleansing of the Temple early in his writings, after the first miracle our Lord performed. Chronologically, the Apostle John puts the event in the wrong order. I believe it’s possible that our Lord did not cleanse the Temple twice. One thing that John emphasised more than the other Gospel writers is the level of animosity and even enmity of Jesus towards the leaders of the Jews. It is possible that, wanting to establish this theme early in his book, John mentioned the clearing of the Temple early in his writings. The rhetorical value of the story is more important than attention to chronology. If we apply a linear, analytical, and scientific approach to the Bible, we will be disappointed—a reason for many who wish to argue that the Bible is not inspired.

In the first page of John 1, he looks at the resurrected Christ. John the Baptist is then mentioned, followed by the time when our Lord changed the water into wine. It portrays the power of the new covenant, or how the old Temple will be destroyed to be replaced by a new Temple in three days’ time (Jn. 2:19). There is so much rich symbolism in the Scripture, causing us sometimes to fail to see the significance of the changing of the water into wine at Cana of Galilee. Many think that Jesus turned water into wine because He wanted to do something nice for the bride and groom. No, there is rich symbolism. He wanted to prove that the old sacrificial system could not guarantee the joy He offered. The old water gave only ceremonial forgiveness, and therefore was short-lived and fading. Our Lord proved that the ‘new wine’ of the Gospel seals and sustains eternal life, filling our hearts with joy. The water is the old covenant, and the wine is our transformation when we share in the life of Christ.

The water in the pots was intended for Jewish purification. The old covenant era was ending, and the new was ushered in by Jesus Christ. The old covenant is embodied by Moses, but Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant. Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana is contrasted to the first miracle of Moses, when he turned the water into blood. Moses’ miracles were the beginning of the plagues of Egypt; the first miracle Jesus performed made the water—or the Word of God—turn into wine,

unto everlasting life. We share in the blessings of the new covenant. The promises of the Old Testament will be realised in Christ. The Apostle John commences his Gospel not with Jesus' birth at Bethlehem. No, he sees the resurrected Christ in John 1. He reflects on the events that most memorised him. John 1:14 says: ‘We saw His glory, and it was the glory of the resurrected Christ.’ It was not the glory with Jesus' birth; no, it was the glory of the resurrected One, and he had a glimpse of it on the Mount of Transfiguration. When the Apostle John mentions the cleansing of the Temple, he mentions the Passover and the resurrected Christ (Jn. 2:22).
To most, there seems to be a contradiction between Matthew and Mark. In Matthew’s account, Jesus drove the money-changers out of the Temple, and then, on the following day, He cursed the fig tree (Mt. 21:10–22). Yet in Mark’s account, He cursed the fig tree and then drove the money-changers out. The problem of an alleged ‘contradiction’ between Matthew and Mark is because the average Bible critic does not understand the perspective from which the Gospels are written. Each writer approaches this incident differently. They do not conform to a strict chronological sequence. Matthew 21:18 does not say that the ‘cursing’ of the fig tree was on the day following the cleansing of the Temple. He simply says that it was ‘in the morning as He returned to the city’
The religious leaders asked Jesus what authority He used to cleanse the Temple. He had the authority as He was the true Son of David, and at Jericho, the blind man who was healed called Him the Son of David. As part of the old covenant, our Lord did not rule as King, as only the high priest of the Old Testament performed service at the Temple. The king and high priest had different responsibilities. Our Lord will rule as part of the new covenant, and He will claim the throne of David. Christ will be both King and High Priest, as it is possible as part of the new covenant, but not as part of the old covenant. They asked Him what right He had, and He told them, after three days, He would rebuild the Temple, and then, as the resurrected One, He would rule. He would end the Mosaic laws to open the way to the new.
‘And the scribes and the chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him, for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching’ (Mk. 11:18).
The chief priests are the jury that finally executes Jesus. They wanted to get rid of Him, as they were concerned about their standing amongst the people. They were frightened of the reaction of the people, so they had to do it very slyly—and trust the politicians, who are masters in planning such tragedies.
They challenged Jesus' authority, asking Him to testify in their court of law as to what gave Him the authority to do what He had been doing. He could have simply said that His authority came from God. What He does in this instance is fairly interesting. He returns a challenging question. He asks them where John the Baptist's authority came from. They won't answer the question, because if they admitted that John the Baptist was from God, then why didn’t they accept him? The people would have revolted if they dared to say he was not from God, as John the Baptist was

very popular. They were tricked and couldn’t say what they believed. Thus, Jesus silences them (Mt. 21:23–27).
What Jesus has done is itself an argument. They have asked Him a question, challenging His authority and seeking for Him to show that He is from God. He, of course, has already done so through His actions. They didn't accept His evidence, via all the miracles He performed. That is the real issue. They knew what John the Baptist did. They know what he said. Yet they won't bring themselves to comment on that evidence—the sort of thing a genuine court of law would do. Why should Jesus testify in their courtroom if they reject the clear evidence of John the Baptist?
They wanted to domesticate and tame Jesus, to place Him under their control. The person who asks the questions is in control of the conversation. You see this all the time with the news media, and that is why a smart person will answer questions not asked in order to not be placed under control. They conferred amongst each other and said they did not know—but they did. If they spoke the truth, it would offend the people. They simply said, ‘We don’t know,’ and ignored the burning issues. Today, there are so many obvious truths in the Bible, and many Christians tend to neglect them. When we discover and get excited about some truths in the Bible, many respond by saying, ‘The secret things belong to the Lord our God’ (Deut. 29:29). There are many things in the Bible we are not meant to know. I believe all the truths are made known to us.
The Old Testament speaks of the Light, yet things remained dark (a mystery) for Israel. They were aware of the pending light, but today Christ reveals all the truths to us. We have no excuse to repeat the words of the jury or the religious leaders: ‘We don’t know. ’

Mark 11:23–26
‘For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses’ (KJV).
What is the purpose of literally moving a mountain into the sea? Some suggest that if we have any obstacles like a mountain that blocks our path, we can easily remove it. Why a mountain?—and is there something hidden? When our Lord says ‘this’ mountain, does it not relate to the Mount of Olives? All the mountains portray the kingdoms of the world, and in this instance, the Mount of Olives or His Kingdom will be cast into the sea—thus the kingdom of Christ will be preached to reach all the Gentile nations. Multiple times in the Bible, the kingdoms of the world are likened to mountains. Jeremiah 51:24–25 says that Babylon is seen as a big, burning mountain that is cast into the sea. In the book of Ezekiel, the king of Tyre is likened to a mountain with great splendour (Ezek. 28:11–19). Moreover, Satan took Christ to a very high mountain to make it obvious

that Satan did and does control the kingdoms of our world (Mt. 4:8). In Zechariah 4:7, Satan is yet again seen as a high mountain.
We, as the children of God, need to pray for the increase of God’s kingdom, and it will be given to us. Prayer is a difficult subject, as we all wish our prayers to be answered. Jesus is telling us that God will not forgive us our sins unless we forgive others when they sin against us. So, in other words, our prayer for forgiveness can be denied if we are holding grudges against each other. An unforgiving spirit can hinder our prayers from being answered. We need to conform to God’s wishes. Soon, the disciples of Jesus will be known as His Apostles, and they needed God’s guiding hand and wisdom. He will grant them their wishes.

Mark 12:1–12
And He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way (KJV).
Before we study the above parable, I wish to discuss the Parable of the Two Sons (Mt. 21:28–32). The parable of the two sons is unique to Matthew's Gospel, not mentioned in the other Gospels. The father calls one of his two sons to work in the vineyard. He refuses, but later apologises and goes to work. The second son makes a quick agreement with the father to work, but he never does. Then Jesus asks, ‘Which of the two did the will of his father?’ He tells a story and then asks the listeners to answer a question. The answer seems straightforward at first glance. Both sons dishonoured their father: the first by his words, the second by his deeds. Neither son was in the right. One had the words, and the other son had the deeds. We remember from Matthew's conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount that merely saying the right words does not ensure entry into the kingdom of heaven. Active obedience to Jesus' teachings must be present.

Everything seems simple in this parable, as the Father (God in heaven) has two sons. They are the two houses of Israel (the two and the ten lost tribes of Israel). The son who made a quick agreement with the father but failed to fulfil his promises is the first son, or the Jewish nation, who appeased the Father but did not work or bear fruit. The obvious question to ask is, who is the other son who refused but ended up working, bearing fruit? Are they the Church? No, in this parable, we are dealing with a father and his two sons, and the Gentile nations are not in the equation. The son who refused but repented to later work for his father's vineyard is the ten lost tribes of Israel, who acknowledged the resurrected Christ. If the one is Judah, then the other son is Ephraim. It is the only logical explanation.

The parable of the tenants is clearly an important part of the New Testament, as it is documented at length in three of the Gospels. What makes it even more interesting is that it appears to be a partial continuation of a similar story given in Isaiah 5. There is a great parallel between the vineyard of the tenants and that of Isaiah 5—striking enough to assume that the religious teachers at Jerusalem knew of its implications. In Isaiah 5, Isaiah speaks of the hill being fruitful, the fencing, the removal of the stones, the planting of the vine, and the building of the tower and the making of the winepress. The New Testament does not mention the fertility of the land, the removal of stones, or any vine planting. Isaiah 5:2 says the Lord Himself was harvesting the vineyard; in fact, the whole passage suggests that He tended it Himself. In the parable of the tenants, we find that the Lord of the vineyard had gone away; others had been left to tend to the grapes. A clear distinction is made. Isaiah suggests that there was a problem with the quality of the fruit; he had looked for good grapes but only received wild ones. We don't know what the quality of the fruit was in the parable of the tenants. The obstacle is that the tenant farmers are refusing to have anything to do with the messengers coming from the Lord of the vineyard.

The final clear distinction is in the fate of the vineyard. In the parable of the tenants, the tenants lose their great opportunity to be blessed, and in Isaiah's passage, the hedge surrounding the vineyard is removed, leaving it barren.

The fat hill in Isaiah is the fertile vineyard, and in both parables, there was a hedge with a gate. He built a tower with a winepress, and He expected good grapes, but they turned out sour. The prospects of the Jewish nation were not good, as in Isaiah 5:6–7, He says what He is going to do with His vineyard: He will take away its hedge, He will break down its wall, and He will make it a wasteland, never to be pruned or cultivated. The briers and thorns will grow there, and it will not rain. Are they not in tune with the words our Lord spoke when He condemned and cursed Jerusalem, when they despised Him?

The following words say: 'The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines He delighted in. And He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress' (Isa. 5:7).

What is so extraordinary regarding the tribe of Judah if they are forsaken today? The reason is that the kingdom belonging to David is invested in the tribe of Judah. Via King David, the promises of the Messiah were realised in the resurrected Christ. Presently, we anticipate the repentance of the Jewish nation, and it will not happen today or tomorrow—no, it will happen on the Day of the Lord, and then the throne of David will be placed at Jerusalem. The repentance of Judah is essential, and after the Day of the Lord, all twelve tribes of Israel will repent. Until that time, Judah will be persecuted and left desolate.

Today, the resurrected Christ is the true vine: 'I am the true vine' (Jn. 15:1). It is the last of seven 'I am' declarations of Jesus, recorded only in John's Gospel. It was only a short time before Judas would betray Him. Jesus was preparing the eleven disciples for His pending crucifixion, His resurrection, and His subsequent ascension to heaven. He will nourish and sustain them just as the roots and trunk of a grape vine ensure the vital nourishment to feed its branches. Jesus went on to remove any misunderstanding about what He meant, saying that no branch can even live, let alone produce leaves and fruit, by itself (Jn. 15:4). Our source of life and spiritual fruit is not in ourselves; it is outside of us, in Christ Jesus. Then Jesus emphasises His view even more strongly by saying, 'Apart from me you can do nothing' (Jn. 15:5). All fruitless branches are recognised as not belonging to the Vine and are removed for the benefit of the other branches.

Indeed, Jesus is the true Vine or Judah—as all the promises of that tribe are relished in Him alone. We depend on Him solely for every blessing we receive: 'For in Him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). Many Christians today tend to think they need to live as Jews, as if their religion is the golden standard—and they are too willing to embrace their culture. They are not our norm, and we need to distance ourselves from their religious pomp and festivals. Once we comply with their religious practices, it will distance us from the true vine. They are spiritually deprived, and they do not know who the true Church is; they do not preach the Gospel, but spend their energy supporting the State of Israel. Judah will revive after the rapture of the Church.

The one who built the vineyard is our Lord, and He expected the tithes from the workers—the people who cultivated the vineyard and enjoyed its fruit. The wicked tenants refused to offer a share of the crops to the owner, and even worse, they killed the owner's messengers and eventually his son died in their hands. Even though these tenants were originally endorsed by the vineyard's owner to represent him and to work his land, the tenants refused to honour the owner and plotted to overthrow him by mistreating his Son. They wanted to steal his field. In this passage, the Pharisees were outraged, realising that Jesus' parable paralleled them refusing Him. The behaviour of the wicked tenants is equalled to their religious practices—wicked men who persecuted and killed the Old Testament prophets.

The owner of the vineyard was very merciful. Out of desperation, he sent his son, thinking they would be merciful, but they killed Him also. It is a Father–Son relationship, ending with our Lord's crucifixion. The beloved

Son (Lk. 20:13) is the firstborn Son, as He is the chosen one to inherit the vineyard. That is the reason why God said, with His Son's baptism: 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Mark 1:11). Our Lord had to die, as the religious leaders in Jesus' time did not want to abandon their authority over the people in Jerusalem. If they accepted Christ, then the people would have refused them as the religious leaders of the nation. At that moment, Caiaphas was the high priest, and he played a key role in the trial and execution of Jesus Christ. Caiaphas accused Jesus of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death as part of the Jewish law. The Sanhedrin did not have the authority to execute people. So Caiaphas turned to Pontius Pilate, who could carry out a death sentence. Caiaphas tried to convince Pilate that Jesus was a real threat to Roman stability and that He had to die to prevent a rebellion. The Romans were pleased with Caiaphas' verdict.

Caiaphas prophesied and said, 'Do you not know that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish?' (Jn. 11:50; 18:14). Unbeknown to Caiaphas, God actually sanctioned Caiaphas' words for God's intended purposes.

Caiaphas said it would be better for one man (Jesus) to die for the nation than for the entire nation to perish. Later in John's Gospel, Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would not die merely for this nation (the Jewish people), but that Jesus would die to bring God's scattered children together and make them one (Jn. 11:52). John did not say that Jesus 'died for' the Jews only, but also the 'other house of Israel or the scattered tribes of Israel that were deported into the Assyrian captivity'.

Jesus 'died for all men' and 'tasted death for every man' (2 Cor. 5:14; Heb. 2:9).

Caiaphas wanted to kill Jesus, and he did not laud Him as Saviour!

His proposal that 'one' man (Jesus) should die for the people was his means of accomplishing his own selfish purpose: the survival of the Jewish nation. And that was his inkling.

He hoped that Rome would vent their frustrations on Jesus and leave the Jewish nation alone.

The 'children of God' who were 'scattered' are the other house or the ten tribes of Israel who disappeared into the Assyrian captivity.

There is no greater pain than having lost your child. A family needs to be intact. When it is not, there is a gaping hole, and it applies to God's children too. The whole nation of Israel (all twelve tribes) are the children of God, and during Jesus' time, the other ten tribes of Israel did not return to their homeland. They are deemed as 'lost' today, but during Jesus' time, their presence was known.

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish military commander, a Pharisee, and a historian early in the New Testament history. He mentioned the ten tribes of Israel who were in Asia and said:

'There are but two tribes in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans, while the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers' (Josephus, Antiquities 11. 5. 2). Josephus was aware of them—too numerous to count—and that the

Euphrates River served as their western border. The Roman Empire could not defeat them.
Caiaphas' resolution was to ensure the survival of the Jewish nation, to appease Rome, at the expense of the 'Son' who visited the vineyard. That is the reason why John points out that Caiaphas was 'high priest that year' and that he spoke in that capacity or by the 'authority' of that office. Caiaphas' words proved worthless, as the Jewish nation was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A. D. , but unbeknown to him, he prophesied that the other house of Israel would be blessed—and that prophecy is fulfilled today, not in the way he thought possible.
This opens a new can of worms!
Remember, this is nothing new, as Balaam too made a remarkable prophecy touching the first coming of Christ and the formation of the Church. Today, we cannot see our Lord, but our eyes of faith can. We will destroy the unbelieving people who refuse Christ. Caiaphas prophesied as Balaam, who said:
'I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel; and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth' (Num. 24:17, KJV). In no uncertain terms, our Lord will gather all the tribes of Israel, or the two houses of Israel, to become one. On the quiet, it is happening today, but after the rapture of the Church, it will be in view of the world.
I will refer to the two houses of Israel as traced in the Old Testament. When we study Ezekiel 34 and 37, we will find many more hints. In Ezekiel 34:20–24, we have the fat and the lean sheep, but the Lord assured them that He (the Shepherd) will lead them. He has other sheep who are not of this fold (Judah), as there are more (the ten lost tribes of Israel), and they will hear His voice (Jn. 10:16). In the book of Ezekiel, it is easy to conclude that the one flock is Judah and the other flock is the ten lost tribes of Israel, and they will heed His Word to be His real firstborn.
Ezekiel 37:16 says the two pieces of wood represent either Judah or Ephraim, but the two sticks will unite.
Our Lord left several clues to hint to the 'other' house of Israel, who are the sheep from the other pen. Jesus says He came unto His own, and they (the Jews) did not receive Him, but as many as did receive Him (the lost tribes), He gave them the power to be called the children of God (Jn. 1:11–12).

The phrase 'Every knee shall bow' (Phil. 2:10) comes from Isaiah 45:21–23. It reads:
'Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance. '
The main thrust of these verses is that only God can save His people.

Verses like ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty’ (Isa. 6:3) and ‘baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matt. 28:19) are no proof for the Trinity. Is it the proper form of baptism? Why did the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul baptise only in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:5) ? Will it unravel all the verses stating God is one? It will not change my stance on the Trinity.
The big question is: who is Jesus? Is He the promised Messiah who will set up His kingdom in Jerusalem? Most Christians refuse to believe that Christ will rule as King on the throne of David. They think His throne is limited to heaven, and Israel will never reunite.
In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus proved Himself to be the Good Samaritan. Christ helped us in our despair. The real question is not ‘Who is my neighbour?’ but ‘Who helped me when I was dying?’ Some people think our good works – like loving the people around us – will allow us to enter heaven. No: our solid faith in Christ will enable us. Only believing in Him qualifies us to enter heaven. To love God is to love my Neighbour with a capital N. The original question was: ‘How can I inherit eternal life, and who is this “neighbour” (Lk. 10:25–36) that I may love Him to inherit eternal life?’ Without a doubt, the neighbour is Christ, as He helped the wounded man who was sure to die. Two silver coins were given to the innkeeper to portray the 2,000 years of our dispensation, and our Lord is the keeper at the inn (the Church). The Levite and the Pharisee epitomise the law, and they had no means to help any person – or the dying.

Mark 12:35–40
And answering, Jesus said, while He taught in the temple, ‘How do the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit, “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. ”’ David himself calls Him Lord. So how can He be David’s son?’ And the many people heard Him gladly. And He said unto them in His doctrine, ‘Beware of the scribes, who love to go in long clothing and love the salutations in the marketplaces and the first chairs in the synagogues and the first seats at the suppers, which devour widows’ houses and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater judgment. ’
This is a direct reference to Psalm 110, the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament – and verse 1 alone is quoted at least 25 times in the New Testament – but also the most debated. Jesus cited this verse to prove that the Messiah is more than a mere physical descendant of David. It is one of the verses which, in the minds of some, places Jesus Christ in a position of being less than equal to God the Father. We have seen pictures of a large throne in heaven with a lesser throne to its right. The larger throne is, to some, the throne of God, and the smaller is for Christ. That picture suggests that somehow Jesus Christ is less than God – which, of course, is impossible because Jesus Christ is God.
Let us have a fresh look at Ps. 110:1, using the Hebrew for a few words: ‘Jehovah said unto Adonai, “Sit Thou at My right hand”.’ ‘Jehovah’ is God’s name, and Jesus Christ is Adonai. ‘Adonai’ is one of Jehovah’s many titles. So, if we interpret the phrase ‘at My right hand’ literally, we will have

Christ/Jehovah sitting on one throne with Christ/Adonai on another throne at His right hand. Once we interpret the phrase literally, confusion reigns, so it has to be taken figuratively. That is to say: is Christ seated now at the right hand of God in heaven, or is there a deeper meaning? There is some confusion.

If we picture Christ sitting at the right hand of God, then why does Ps. 110:5 contradict 110:1? Verse 5 says God (Jehovah) is seated at the right hand! This is confusing if we picture Christ sitting at the right hand of Jehovah. In 110:1, the original Hebrew texts had the name for God as YHWH (usually translated as LORD in capital letters), and when it is Adonai, they capitalise only the first letter (Lord). We will notice that this rendition shows LORD in verse 5 as being YHWH, though commonly it is translated as Lord (Adonai) in most versions. Ps. 110:5 is one of the 134 places where the Sopherim admit to changing the text from the divine name 'YHWH' to Adonai, in the 2nd century BC.

'Right hand' in the Hebrew is translated from the word yamiyn (Strong's no. 3225), and it is related to the word miyn (Strong's no. 4327), meaning of its own 'kind' or 'sort'. Genesis 1 is familiar to most people, and the first time the word 'kind' is mentioned is in verse 24: 'And God said, Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.' Now it is easier to understand that Jehovah and Adonai are of the same kind. There is no rivalry as to who is sitting on the left or on the right.

Having said this, let us now go to the Old Testament and study the phrase 'right hand'. In my opinion, it is very important to understand how the phrase was used in the Old Testament, because that is how it would be understood by those living at the time when the New Testament was written. We will not study the passages that obviously refer to the **right hand** as opposed to the left, but only when it will help us to understand the phrase in Ps. 110.

• The first occurrence of the phrase is in Deut. 33:2: 'From His right hand went a fiery law.' Is it written literally or figuratively? The literal meaning is obviously that the 'fiery law' did come from God. The point is not that the law came from His right hand, but that it came from God. 'His right hand' is used as a figure of speech to stand for God's power and authority. In this verse, it is His authority as He gives His law.

• Ps. 16:8–11: 'I have set the Lord always before me: Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved…. At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' Note verse 8 when it says: 'He is at my right hand'. The Psalmist is literally saying God is always with him. He is using 'at my right hand' as a figure of speech for God's power and authority.

• Ps. 17:7: 'Thou that savest by Thy right hand.' It is a figure of speech to relay the saving power of God.

• Ps. 20:6: 'Saving strength of His right hand.' It is, of course, not literally God's right hand that saves; it is God who saves.

• Ps. 48:10: 'Thy right hand is full of righteousness.' It is not literally God's right hand that is full of righteousness; it is God who is 'full of righteousness'.

• Ps. 60:5: ‘Save with Thy right hand.’ It is the figure of speech, as it is not His right hand that saves; it is God who saves.
• Ps. 63:8: ‘My soul clings to Thee; Thy right hand upholds me.’ Again, ‘Thy right hand’ is used as a figure of speech, as it is God who supports the Psalmist.
• Ps. 74:10–11: ‘O God, how long shall the adversary approach? Shall the enemy blaspheme Thy name for ever? Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?’ It is obvious that ‘the right hand’ is God Himself. That is to say, the Psalmist asks why God withdraws, not why His right hand is withdrawn – His power and authority.
• Ps. 80:14–15: ‘Return… and visit this vine; and the vineyard which Thy right hand hath planted.’ The intent of this verse is not to say that God used only His right hand to plant. Again, ‘Thy right hand’ is used as a figure of speech for God’s power and authority.
• Ps. 98:1: ‘He hath done marvellous things. His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory.’ The point is not that God used one hand to get the victory. It is that God got the victory.
Once we notice that the phrase ‘at the right hand’ is used as a figure of speech, we are ready to study the New Testament uses of the phrase ‘at the right hand’. The first occurrence is found in Matthew 22:44, which is a quote from Ps. 110:1.
• Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62: ‘You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One, coming on the clouds of heaven.’ If the phrase is to be understood figuratively, and ‘the right hand of the Mighty One’ is to be taken literally, then the Son of Man and the Mighty One will come down together from heaven.
• Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; Heb. 1:13: quotes from Ps. 110:1.
• Mark 16:19: ‘…He was taken up into heaven and He sat at the right hand of God.’ There is no question that Christ is in heaven, a literal location. That does not, however, mean that the phrase ‘at the right hand of God’ must also be taken literally. Mark understood the Old Testament, knowing it is to be read figuratively.
• Luke 22:69: ‘From now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.’ This statement by our Lord comes as a response to the question asked by the chief priests: ‘Are you the Christ?’ He told them so much more – even that He would be exalted to the heavens.
• Acts 2:25: quoted from Ps. 16:8–11.
• Acts 2:33: ‘Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost.’ The word ‘exalted’ is an obvious clue that the phrase is to be taken figuratively, as to a position of honour and glory.
• Acts 5:31: ‘Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.’ This is the same phrase that we have read so many times in the Old Testament.
• In Acts 7:55–56, we read of Stephen seeing ‘the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God’. The Greek word kai (translated ‘and’ in this verse) can also be translated ‘even’. Because God is Jesus Christ, I believe that in this verse ‘kai’ should be translated ‘even’. So Stephen saw

the glory of God – even Jesus – standing at the right hand of God.
• Rom. 8:34: ‘Who is He that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.’ I hope we understand that the phrase ‘at the right hand’ is used figuratively for His position. He was exalted to the highest position in heaven with His resurrection. Figuratively speaking, to the greatest position of power at the right hand of God. To interpret the phrase ‘at the right hand’ literally tells us only where Christ is. In my opinion, it is not what Paul intended to say.
• Eph. 1:20–22: ‘Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named… and hath put all things under His feet.’ It quotes from Ps. 110:1, to be studied figuratively. The point is that Christ is so much more than all the other principalities, not that He is placed above them.
• Col. 3:1: ‘If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.’ There is no question that Christ is seated in heaven. The question is whether the phrase ‘sitteth on the right hand of God’ refers to where in heaven He is seated or whether Paul is writing of the position Christ holds in heaven.
• Heb. 1:3: ‘Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.’ It centres on who Christ is. He is the glory and image of God; He is all-powerful, and He purged our sins. It is absurd to think that the writer of Hebrews goes from such a lofty theme to tell us where Christ is seated today.
• Heb. 8:1: ‘We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.’ What are ‘the sum of things’ on the writer’s heart? It is Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Note, for example, 7:26: ‘We need such a High Priest – one who is holy, innocent, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.’ The phrase ‘exalted above the heavens’ is obviously meant to be taken figuratively. That is to say, He was exalted more than anyone or anything on earth or in heaven. Verse 8:1 condenses Christ’s exalted position. Surely, the sum of those things is not His location in heaven? It is His authority as our High Priest.
• Heb. 10:12: ‘But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.’ Christ made an end of all the Old Testament sacrifices. I believe that the contrast is being made between the ineffectiveness of the old and the effectiveness of the new. Therefore, once again, the writer is emphasising the position of Christ and not His location.
• Heb. 12:2: ‘Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.’ In my opinion, it is impossible to believe that Jesus Christ endured the cross and the shame so that He would be located at the right hand of God. It is meant to be understood figuratively.

• 1 Pet. 3:22: ‘Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God: angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.’ Angels and powers are not made subject to Christ simply because of where He is located. It is a figure of speech emphasising His position of authority and power.

Who is David’s Lord?

The essential nature of Jesus Christ has been debated ever since He walked on earth – and even today. It comes down to this: is He God, or is He merely a man?

The general consensus in the world is that Jesus was a man who lived and died – noble, devout, religious, compassionate, and whatever other adjectives you would like to add. But a man. That is in harmony with Satan’s agenda, because if Jesus is merely a man, then He is not God; He is not the Saviour; and the Bible is fake. If, on the other hand, Jesus is God, then He is Sovereign, and the Bible is true. It is the critical issue.

The target of false religions is always going to be the person of Christ. When Jesus claimed to be God, He immediately became a blasphemer. He committed the most terrible of sins they could have dreamt of in their religious system. To claim to be God was madness. To the Jews, the true Messiah would be a man and nothing more. And Jesus claiming to be God, in their religion, was a crime worthy of death.

Well, the last time He is going to speak with them is to discuss the most important issue. He asks them: since David called the Messiah ‘my Lord’, how can the Messiah be his son?

Why is Jesus addressing this subject now? Doesn’t He know that the religious leaders totally rejected Him? What is the point of going back to clarify who He really is? What is the point?

He is still down to the very last conversation, inviting sinners to know Him for who He truly is.

As expected, they told Jesus He would be David’s son. Then: ‘What do you think about the Christ?’ When we compare this to the Book of Luke, it reads: ‘How is it that they say the Christ is David’s son?’ How did you come to that conclusion? He questioned their common belief. They believed the Messiah would be merely a man – but the best of men, the noblest of men, the most gifted and blessed of them, and a son of David.

Beware: the fundamental question we need to tackle is the nature of Jesus Christ. If He is just another man, then the Bible lies; and reasoning He is not God, then at best, ignore Christianity. The religious leaders – as many today – are convinced in their minds that the Messiah is only a man.

However, they answered correctly, saying He is the son of David. 2 Samuel 7 prophesies clearly that the Messiah will descend from the line of David. Read Psalm 89, and you will find it written six times. Messiah will come out of the loins of David (Amos 9:11; Mic. 5:2). The Jews of Jesus’ time commonly believe it; it is so obvious in the Old Testament, they had to believe it. It is verified in Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; and 21:9. The genealogy of Matt. 1 and Luke 3 establishes that He is in the Davidic line. The scribes kept those records with great precision, detailing the tribes, families, and heritage for the future great glorious kingdom to come. It is verified, and I am sure they knew – in fact, He was the Son of David. The

Jewish interpretation of Psalm 110 is of the coming Messiah. He will make all of Israel's – and God's – enemies a footstool for His feet.
The main question of Psalm 110 remains: how can the Messiah be both David's son and his Lord? There is only one possibility. The eternal God had to become man.
The Messiah is both man and God, both David's son and David's Lord. King David spoke of Him in the present tense, affirming Him to be his Lord. The Spirit of God stirred David to say it (Acts 4:25). In fact, David is saying that the Messiah – who has not even come yet – is my Lord. That kind of reminds me of what Thomas said when he saw Jesus after His resurrection. He said, 'My Lord and my God. '
The Messiah will return on the Day of the Lord to reign, and He will place His heel on the neck of His enemies. His earthly kingdom will be established, and His enemies will perish. After His discussion with the Sadducees, Luke says their discussions ended. The Pharisees retreated from their brief meeting. They had nothing more to say. Jesus asked a question they could not answer. Similarly, if we reject Christ, we have nowhere to go, walking aimlessly in life.
Jesus said He is the root and the offspring of David (Rev. 22:16). He was both LORD (in capital letters, or Jehovah) and David's Lord. When Jesus walked on earth, He was always God – God manifest in the flesh. The works He did attested His true identity as God, but the words concerning His Deity never came from His mouth. Jesus probably came the closest to admitting who He really was when He said, 'Philip, have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father' (Jn. 14:9). The resurrected and exalted Christ is the omnipresent and omnipotent God. He is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15; 2:9). It is not by halves, but in 'all the fullness'. Some think of Christ as a hybrid being – half man, half God. But He was 'the fullness of God in bodily form'. The theologians think He was indwelt by the eternal Son of God, but the Bible never speaks of an eternal Son of God. There is no 'second' person.
I am afraid to tell you – but you will be shocked. On the day when Christ resurrected from the dead, then only was He appointed to become the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). It was not prior to His resurrection. He became the true Firstborn of a new creation with His resurrection. He did not attain it via His birth at Bethlehem. On that memorable day, the second Psalm is fulfilled, and the Apostle Paul attested this when he spoke to an audience at Antioch. He said the promises that were made to their fathers, God did accomplish, and their children are witnesses: the promises are fulfilled in the resurrected Christ when He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.' In fact, God raised Him from the dead never to see decay. As He has said: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David' (Acts 13:33–34).
The Apostle Paul referred to the Psalm: 'Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee' (Ps. 2:7).
There is no mention of an eternal 'Son of God' before Christ's resurrection. We can only inherit once someone dies, and for that reason there is reference to Christ as the Son of God. He died to be resurrected as the

God of a total new creation.
There was a great stand-off when Jehovah Himself died on the cross, and the reason is only via His death He can destroy the old creation to be resurrected as part of a total new creation. Satan is the master of the old creation, but the old creation in its entirety will be annihilated with Satan and all his followers (Heb. 1:4; 2:7). I was surprised to find that the phrase ‘only begotten Son’ is used only twice with reference to Jesus (Jn. 3:16, 18). The words ‘the only begotten Son of God’ are always set in a context that involves Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Jesus talks to a Jewish rabbi named Nicodemus about being ‘born again’ – or more literally, ‘born from above’ – and uses the words ‘only begotten Son’ and ‘the name of the only begotten Son of God’. Clearly, John 3 is speaking about our spiritual birth, and Jesus had to be lifted up on the cross, crucified, and raised from the dead before He would be able to impart eternal life to anyone. He told Nicodemus, ‘You must be born from above.’ He meant a spiritual birth that would be ‘wrought in God’ through Christ, who is raised from the dead and ascended into glory. Therefore, the words ‘only begotten Son’ do NOT refer to the birth of Jesus but are tied directly to His resurrection from the dead. Throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, He was often referred to – or He referred to Himself – as ‘the Son of man’ or Adam. Somewhat puzzling is why Jesus did not say He is ‘the only begotten Son of God’. To ‘beget’ or to be ‘begotten’ implies the birthing process, as when a woman gives ‘birth’ to her child.
From now on, when you think of the ‘only begotten Son’, do not see the child Jesus in His mother’s arms. Visualise the Firstborn from the dead, the great High Priest of the order of Melchizedek, who passed through the heavens, glorified on the throne, waiting for His enemies to be a footstool under His feet, possessing immortality and dwelling in unapproachable light, to whom belongs honour and dominion for ever! ‘For to which of the angels did He ever say, “You are My Son; today I have begotten You”?’ (Heb. 1:5).
Beware: if we refuse to accept Christ as God, the real Firstborn of a new creation, then we will be tossed about and end up translating Acts 13:33 as many other modern translators twist the truth, saying: ‘Is it not written in the second Psalm, “You are My Son; today I have fathered You”?’ (NET Bible). We need to get to the core, asking who the Son is and what promises were made to David – and it is condensed in 2 Samuel 7.
In this chapter, King David had in mind to build a temple in which the Ark of God could be placed – a place where God could be worshipped. David first suggests this to Nathan the prophet, and Nathan agrees totally, encouraging him to go ahead and get things started. However, God speaks to Nathan that night and tells him that David is not going to build a temple. Then God uses Nathan to impart a prophetic message concerning King David and his son. It is generally known today as the Davidic covenant, promising David that he will have a son who will build a temple for God, and the ‘Son’ will sit on the throne for ever. God gives David a set of prophecies which may be applied both to Solomon and to Jesus Christ – both of whom will sit on the throne of David. Obviously, Jesus Christ will reign for ever.

There is really no other way of looking at this chapter.
• God goes from what He has already done (giving David's enemies into his hand) to what He would do for David in the future, making him famous (v. 9).
• God then speaks of Israel as being planted in a place where they will not be disturbed again (v. 10). As an afterthought, I believe in a secretive way God is also speaking to Israel – or the 10 tribes of Israel – who will be planted or scattered in the world, inhabiting Western Europe and many other countries, to be never bothered again by enemies like the Philistines. Israel was planted as a nation by Joshua, and will they be planted again? Yes: here God is speaking of a time we live in today – the countries who accept the Gospel. In no uncertain terms, God says He will provide a homeland for my people Israel, planting them in a secure place where they will never be disturbed. It also looks ahead to the Millennium, when physical Israel will be blessed again to inhabit Jerusalem.
• God then promises to make a dynasty of David's kingship (v. 11).
• God launches into a dual prophecy of Solomon and of Christ Jesus. After David died, God would raise up his Descendant, and God would establish His kingdom (v. 12). After King David dies, someone will be born to be the 'Seed' or the Son. Nathan is not speaking of King Solomon, as he was born when David was alive. It is literally fulfilled in Christ (Acts 2:30). King Solomon is a picture of who the real Christ will be. We realise the history of King Solomon did not end well, and similarly our Lord dying at Calvary. In the Book of Daniel, we find that the prophecies made by Daniel were fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes, and the same prophecies will again be fulfilled by the Antichrist in the near future (Dan. 8:9–14, 23–25; 11:21–35). They were fulfilled, but they also foretell the future. Similarly, there is a bond between King Solomon and Christ.
• This Descendant would build a temple for God (v. 13).
• This Descendant would be like a Son to God, and God would be a Father to Him (v. 14). The Book of Hebrews 1:5 quotes this verse. Obviously, it speaks of the Messiah, but the latter part of the verse is somewhat confusing. The reason is the remaining verse says: 'For the promised punishment for sin, He was beaten with rods and scourged with a whip if He sins.' It is true: as Jesus of Nazareth was beaten, and He died on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind (Isa. 53:5).
It is needless to tussle with the expression 'son'. When I die, my inheritance will go to my closest family or my own children. Similarly, when the 'Father' died to end the old creation and unlock the door of a total new creation, then His throne was inherited by His closest relative – and it happens to be Himself – the 'One' who resurrected from the dead as Christ. Then He is known as the Son, and there are no two persons. Jesus, as part of the old creation, resurrected as Christ as part of the new creation.
• God's grace would not depart from Him, and David's dynasty would thus be established in Him for ever (vv. 15–16). However, Jehovah will take away our positions of honour and authority in the kingdom from wicked men who misuse their positions. Obviously, the 'Son' is not King Solomon, but Christ who will rule the world for ever – for all eternity. 'For ever I will

establish thy Seed, and build up thy throne to all generations' (Ps. 89:4).
• He recognises his own worthlessness (v. 19) and is at a loss for words (v. 20).
He recognises that there is no other nation which is like Israel insofar as what God has done for that nation (vv. 23–24). He then beseeches God to bring these things to pass so that He might be glorified (vv. 25–26). David finds the courage to pray such a prayer, as it is based upon God's promises to him and that God's Word is truth (vv. 27–28). Finally, David asks for God's continual blessings on his house (v. 29).
This covenant is significant, and it is cited 16 times in the New Testament. And Jesus called Himself the Son of David. The Son of David is mentioned three times in the Old Testament: 2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 17; Ps. 89.
The promises made to David, like:
'I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever' (v. 13)
and 'Your house and your kingdom will endure for ever before me; your throne will be established for ever' (v. 16), seem somewhat debatable or erroneous when we study the Book of Hosea. The promises God made to David's kingdom are unconditional, to prove God's real character and nature. Most Christians today agree that Israel is lo-ammi or not God's people. They think Israel is put aside at Acts 28, never to be reckoned again as God's people.
'For this people's heart has grown callous; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.' Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen (Acts 28:27–28). If we think God severed all His ties with Israel, then Israel is known as lo-ammi during the entire New Testament era, including today. What began as a genuine promise turned somewhat sour.
I believe it is easily explained – a common topic in our Bible. It is noticed when Jacob decided to split his household in two, thinking if the one party is killed, the other party will escape. Jacob hid for 20 years, and he was frightened, thinking Esau wanted to kill him and his children.
Similarly, God did divide Israel for a reason into the two and the 10 tribes. Similarly, God in His wisdom knew if the one house of Israel did reject Him, the other 'house' would accept Him. If the Jewish nation did reject Him, the remaining 10 tribes of Israel would accept Him – and they did. The 10 tribes of Israel did accept Christ, but today it is less noticeable. With the Assyrian captivity, the 10 tribes of Israel became lo-ammi, and Judah remained Ammi or God's people. Acts 28 spells the end of God's dealings with the two tribes of Israel – or the Jewish nation – and then they became lo-ammi. And surprisingly, the 10 tribes of Israel surfaced, who gladly received the message of Christ to become Ammi or God's people. They are blessed with the blessing once made to King David.
When Hosea gave the bleak message to Israel, naming them lo-ammi or 'not my people', then in the same breath Hosea made some positive remarks. He says a time will come when Israel's people will be like the sands of the seashore – too many to count! Then, at the place where they were told, 'You are not my people', it will be said, 'You are children of the

living God' (Hos. 1:9–10). It happened officially after Christ's resurrection. Thus, there will always be a part of Israel who are His remnant to gladly accept Him – and the everlasting blessings will be poured on them. Unbeknown to the world and many Christians today, the 'other house' or the previous lost sheep – the real firstborn – do harvest the first treasures of the new covenant. They became as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore! God made the covenant for His own glory, and He accomplishes it right now. The main bulk of the Church are the lost tribes of Israel. The main theme of David's Psalms is the 'Son' or the Messiah, who is David's greater Son, indicating to us that God revealed the greater truths to David. In the Psalms, the Messiah is portrayed as the:

- Suffering Servant. Ps. 22
- Entering into His Kingdom of Glory. Ps. 2 24
- He is called the Son of God; Ps. 2:7
- God. Ps. 45:6–7; 102:24–25; 110:1
- The Son of Man. Ps. 8:4–6
- The Son of David. Ps. 89:3–4, 27, 29
- He is seen as a priest. Ps. 110:4
- A prophet. Ps. 40:9–10
- A king. Ps. 2 24; Ps. 89
- As a priest, He offers Himself as a sacrifice. Ps. 22 40:6–8; compare with Heb. 10:5–12
- As a prophet, He proclaims the name of the Lord as Father. Ps. 22:22; John 20:17
- He restores man's dominion over the earth via Christ. Ps. 8:4–8;
- His very inner thoughts are revealed in the Psalms. Ps. 16:8–11 22:1–22 40:1–17. 3

-David wrote most of the above-cited Psalms, indicating that he understood more about the Messiah than his compatriots.
There will be times when we are speaking of Solomon, times when we are speaking of David's greater Son, the Messiah, and times when some verses are applied to both. This may sound complex, but it is simple and fairly easy to understand. People who refuse Christ hate the idea of prophecy, and they try to degrade it whenever possible. Critics of the Bible ridicule it in every way they can.

Mark 12:38–44
And he said unto them in his doctrine, 'Beware of the scribes, who love to go in long clothing and love the salutations in the marketplaces, 39and the first chairs in the synagogues and the first seats at the suppers, 40which devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater judgment.' 41And with Jesus sitting in front of the ark of the offering, he beheld how the people cast money into the ark, and many that were rich cast in much. 42And as there came a certain poor widow, she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. 43Then, calling his disciples, he said unto them, 'Verily I say unto you that this poor widow has cast more in than all those who have cast into the treasury, 44for they all did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. '

There is a special concern for the fair treatment of widows. They draw Jesus' particular attention. Nowhere are widows given a more thoughtful concern than in Mark 12, with three references to the plight of the widows. First, there is that question about a woman who was widowed seven times; next, Jesus warns his disciples to be wary of the teachers or the religious leaders who rob us today! They like to parade around in flowing robes and receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces. They love the seats of honour, and they are at the head table at many banquets. They shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. They devour widows' houses.

Jesus then takes a seat opposite the temple treasury, where he watches people putting in their offerings. There were many rich folks who made a show of their wealth. What caught Jesus' eye among all the donors at the temple was a widow who approached the alms box very cautiously—a woman giving her last two mites, the smallest coins in circulation. Modern translations call them pennies, not worth much.

To the rich people, the pennies were worthless, but she gave everything she had. She had nothing left, nothing more for her to spend. She gave it all. There are more narratives in the Bible of people giving generously. One comes to mind that closely resembles this story of the widow's mite. It was a woman at Simon's house who was a leper. She came to the dinner party where Jesus was attending with a jar of very costly ointment, and she broke open the jar and poured it on Jesus' head—a lavish display of extravagance. The people criticised her for doing this because the oil could have been sold for 300 denarii and the money could have been given to the poor, or so they said. But Jesus defended her because he said she was anointing his body for burial, linking what she did with his death. The two women and their extravagant acts are linked to Jesus' death because Jesus himself lays down an extravagant amount, like the woman with the ointment who anointed him, like the widow who gave all she had; as Jesus said, her whole 'living'. For Jesus, it would be his whole life that he would pour out and give away on the cross. Those who made a show of their gifts at the temple, who dropped large amounts in the treasury coffers, gave out of the surplus of what they had left over.

Like Judas reaching into the money bag, the sad reality is that a small minority of Christian pastors steal from God's people. As Christians, we hate to face this truth, but I believe we must, as it is our duty to protect our less mindful brothers and sisters—or widows—from these thieves. Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. 2 Cor. 2:17. Funding the great cathedral is another issue, and many false churches have peddled it with the poor people's money, making them think their 'money' can ensure forgiveness of sins. Today the churches are rich, but their members are poor.

Mark 13:1–13

And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples said unto him, 'Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' 2And Jesus, answering, said unto him, 'Seest thou these great buildings? There

shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.’
3And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter
and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4‘Tell us, when shall
these things be? And what shall be the sign when all things are to be
finished?’ 5And Jesus, answering them, began to say, ‘Take heed that no
one deceive you, 6for many shall come in my name, saying, I Am Christ,
and shall deceive many. 7And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of
wars, be ye not troubled, for such things must needs be; but the end shall
not be yet. 8For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against
kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall
be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. 9But take
heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the
synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and
kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. 10And the gospel must
first be published among all nations. 11But when they shall lead you, and
deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither
do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that
speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. 12Now the
brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and
children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put
to death. 13And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he
that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. ’

A new chapter in this history begins when Jesus and the disciples head towards the Mount of Olives. From there they had a brilliant view of the temple, and the disciples were in awe, admiring the beautiful structures. Clearly it was massive, and it must have been a magnificent sight, but Jesus used this as a teaching moment, saying: ‘Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’ This statement by Jesus caused the disciples to pull him aside privately to ask him: ‘Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?’

It began Jesus’ long teaching on what is known as the Olivet Discourse. The disciples admired Herod’s temple, rebuilt on massive quarried blocks still visible today at the Wailing Wall. Jesus invited them to have another good look, predicting that the complete Jewish arrangement would somersault. He prophesied its destruction, as well as the enormity, in harmony with the words Daniel spoke concerning the destruction of the temple. Dan. 9:26. Picture the temple mount today and you will only see the retaining walls. In AD 70, Titus tore down the temple, not leaving one stone on another. Today only the Mosque of Omar is noticeable, and it was built between AD 687 and 691. Jesus was most interested in this prophecy of Daniel. He referred to the ‘abomination of desolation’ as a key feature of the time just prior to his return. In Mark 13:14 and Matthew 24:15, the appearance of the abomination of desolation in the temple is the signal for believers in Judea to flee to the mountains. Jesus did not expect them to be removed from the earth. We can divide the chapter into what happens before the abomination of desolation (v. 14) and what happens afterwards.

- Mark 13:3–4 is the beginning of the Olivet Discourse. Only Peter, James, John, and Andrew are identified as asking the questions of Jesus privately. Mark only records two questions, but Matthew includes the following question: what will be the sign of Jesus's return and of the end of the age? Mt. 24:3. He elaborated upon them more diligently than the other Gospels. Matt. 24 & 25.

The 'abomination of desolation' will trigger the time of suffering which Jesus calls the great tribulation. Mt. 24:15, 21. Immediately after that tribulation, Jesus will appear in glory. Mt. 24:29. It is important to note that some events happened in the past, but the greater fulfilment is imminent. Jesus obviously did not return when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, but he will when he appears on the Day of the Lord.

The build-up to the tribulation period

In the following few verses, the Lord provides an outline of many events that will lead us to the start of the seven-year tribulation period. Foremost, he warns them concerning deception by false Christs, and secondly the wars and the rumours of wars.

Mark 13:5–6: Christ warns us about the deception of false Christs. They put their own interests at heart. 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.' Mt. 7:15–16. Wolves do not often attack wolves, but they do go after sheep. They bring destructive teachings and lies into the church, telling people what they want to hear. Jer. 23. They provide layers of truth mixed with error, but even a broken clock is right twice a day.

Mark 13:7–8: Our Lord adds more to the list, but he tells the believer in Christ not to be troubled. These other events are:

- Hearing of wars and rumours of wars
- Nation rising against nation
- Kingdom against kingdom
- Earthquakes in various places
- Famines and troubles

The world has experienced all of them, and there has never been an extended time of peace. It will never happen until the Prince of Peace appears to establish the Millennium. Isa. 9:6–7.

What would differentiate all previous occurrences from those leading up to the seven years of tribulation is the frequency, intensity, and geographic extent of these horrible events. The climax of all these events will be during the seven years of tribulation, with the peak in the latter half of the seven years of tribulation, and the 33 years leading to the battle of Armageddon. The following words seem to be emphasised: 'nations', 'kingdoms', and 'sorrows'. I believe the real born-again Christians are spared from them. Today God coordinates the heavenly bodies, but after the rapture of the Church, the heavenly bodies will strike our world. The heavens are unstable, but they are stabilised by God until the great tribulation.

Mark 13:9–13

‘But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. 10And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. 12Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. ’
This kind of persecution is happening right now, but it will intensify until the tribulation hits. The Church will be gone, but the believers who accept Christ during the great tribulation will be persecuted. The only guaranteed safe haven during the great tribulation is Petra. During the great tribulation, the two prophets Moses and Elijah will share the gospel, and from them the 144,000 evangelists will spread the gospel to the world, leading to the battle of Armageddon. Many will turn from their sins to Christ in the midst of this terror. So what is God’s message to them, and to us if we were to get a taste of the persecution?
The first thing God says is: ‘Be on guard; you will face severe persecution. You can’t do anything about war or disasters, but you can get ready to be personally persecuted. Get rid of your idealistic fantasies regarding a carefree life void of persecutions. ’
They will deliver us to the courts. They are going to arrest you. You will be grabbed and delivered over to the authorities. People will turn you in. Christians will be handed over, and it will be ongoing, every moment of every day. Believers are arrested today, and it will intensify during the tribulation. They will abuse you and beat you. That is why Paul says, ‘Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.’ 2 Cor. 11:24. Paul was hauled into synagogues, accused of blasphemy. That is Jewish persecution. The courts of Israel were in the synagogues.
They will also be persecuted by the governors and kings for my sake, as a testimony to them. The Gentiles too will persecute them.
‘Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’ 2 Tim. 3:12.
Paul said the gospel ‘has been made known to all nations’. Rom. 16:26. Early in Church history, it was preached throughout the world, and it will be continued by the new believers during the great tribulation. They will have the same mission, with the 144,000 evangelists to support them.
Do not be anxious; do not fret. v. 11. Do not be praying about getting out of jail—that is not your goal. Your goal is to depend on the Lord in such a way as not to be worried, but to trust him. Speak what the Spirit puts on your heart. Sometimes you read about the martyrs singing hymns and giving testimony to Christ. Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, Paul before Agrippa, and Luther before the Diet of Worms—that is a great comfort. ‘For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.’ Lk. 21:15.

You will be betrayed by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all on account of my name. The hate for Christ, the fear of not turning someone in, even the torture of interrogation, will be so great it will result in families turning on each other and killing each other.
‘You shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.’ The believers will experience universal hatred. ‘If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.’ Jn. 15:18–21. ‘If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.’ Jn. 15:18. As we approach the end, more and more of this will be true for us.
‘But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.’ ‘The one’ is singular, so it is as if he is pointing to each of us. Fake Christians melt under the heat of persecution, but it strengthens true Christians.

Mark 13:14–20
‘But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: 15And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: 16And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. 17But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 18And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. 19For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. 20And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. ’
It is essential to have a sound knowledge of Daniel’s 70th week to attain a better knowledge of the prophecies. This prophecy commences with the ‘Abomination’.
Daniel’s 70th Week – The Abomination of Desolation
Daniel studied the Book of Jeremiah, and he was well aware of the 70 years of bondage the Jewish nation had to experience at Babylon. Jer. 25:10–11; 29:10.
Even though Daniel was very gifted, he took time to study the prophecies, and he is reckoned as one of the four great prophets with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Even our Lord called Daniel a prophet, Mt. 24:15, but strangely the Jews today do not reckon him as such. They group Daniel as a historic book. The Talmud says explicitly that Daniel was not a prophet.
Before ploughing into the subject, we need a little more background. Daniel was an old man, probably in his eighties. He had been in Babylon for nearly 70 years and knew from reading Jeremiah’s recently completed scroll—especially Jeremiah 25—that the 70 years of captivity had nearly lapsed. Dan. 9:2.
Jeremiah was not much older than Daniel, and the last time we read about him is when Jerusalem was destroyed and he went to Egypt. About 50 years later, Daniel studied his prophecies, and the 70 years troubled him. Today Jeremiah’s prophecies are loathed, since they are so disturbing.

Jeremiah did not go with the Jewish nation into the Babylonian captivity as Daniel did, but he remained with the people in Jerusalem to caution them. We can compare the time of Jeremiah before the destruction of Jerusalem to Jesus' time on earth and to our turmoil today. Jerusalem will shortly be razed to the ground. When the people asked Jeremiah to pray for the city, he refused, as God's judgment was fixed. Jer. 7, 11, 14. Similarly today, we do not need to pray for Jerusalem. God is not going to change his mind about the tribulation, for the old will be made redundant to be exchanged for the new. God is annoyed with Jerusalem, since they rejected Christ. We are asked to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, Ps. 122:6, but that prayer is only appropriate once complete Israel repents. God will not listen to any of our prayers if they are directed to the Jews living in unbelief. To the contrary, Jeremiah encouraged the nation to pray for Babylon, for in that city they would find peace, and they were even encouraged to build houses there. Jer. 29:5–7, 28.

Daniel, at his old age, was good at maths. He knew Judah had only two years left to repent, as 68 years had lapsed. He was concerned since the Jews were unrepentant, and therefore he prayed for the complete nation. He argued that since Judah was unwilling to repent, he would intercede for them. Normally that was the responsibility of the high priest, but Daniel took that responsibility upon himself. Daniel's prayer covers almost the complete chapter, and that prayer is an example of the prayer of each future believing Jew when they repent to enter the Millennium.

It proved at the time of Daniel that Israel disobeyed God, refusing to repent. Two years later (536 BC), Ezra, together with a small group of believers, tried to restore the temple, but they failed.

The reason is that the Jewish nation refused any help from the Samaritans. The Samaritans were the ten lost tribes that were taken captive in the Assyrian exile. Samaria was their capital city, and frequently our Lord visited them. Effectively, for sixteen years the Samaritans hindered the rebuilding of the temple. They resumed the rebuilding of the temple in the year 520 BC, and it corresponds to the 70 years since the destruction of Jerusalem. The 16-year period symbolises the time of the Church, for currently the temple is not in Israel, but rather it is with the Church—or the 'ten tribes'—in heaven. Today the firstborn right is with Joseph or Ephraim, and unbeknown to the world, it is absorbed by the Church today. The Samaritans—or the Church—caused the delay in the building of the temple, as the real temple today is the Church in heaven.

After the Babylonian captivity, most of the Jews lived outside of Israel, and they felt at ease living in Babylon. It is similar today, as many in Israel feel intimidated by the hostilities of the surrounding Arab countries and prefer living in the main cities of the world like New York.

The unique trait of the Jewish people is their unbelief. Their rejection of Christ resulted in them being taken captive in the Egyptian captivity in AD 70. Whenever Israel is willing to pray the prayer of Daniel, they will be saved. I believe the prayer of Daniel will be on each reborn Jewish lip on the 'Day of the Lord', when they repent.

Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 portrays:

- Firstly, the prayer of the Lord Jesus on the cross, since he reconciled the whole world to himself.
- Secondly, it is the prayer of each reborn Christian.
- Thirdly, it is the prayer of the believing remnant of Israel during the great tribulation.
- Lastly, that prayer will be cited by each Gentile before entering the Millennium.

Due to Daniel's concern regarding Israel, God revealed many greater truths to him. Indeed, the history of Israel did not end here, and God shared them with Daniel. The 70 weeks of Daniel prophesy the time until all of Judah will be saved. It includes our time of waiting, totalling 2000 years.

Due to Daniel's concern for Israel, he was entrusted with something totally new. The '70 weeks period' has nothing in common with the 70 years of Jeremiah. The angel Gabriel detailed to Daniel the 'times' to follow. It is not a simple matter to tackle the complex Jewish history lasting nearly 2600 years until Judah repents.

When we study the Word of God and pray as Daniel did, the Holy Spirit will instruct us, and he will lead us to the truth. Jn. 16:13. The Word of God will enlighten us.

Daniel desired to know when Israel would repent, and God answered him. He felt so depressed when he woke from a long sleep, and he had no idea there would be such a great gap in God's salvation plan.

God will caution any believer if there is any pending judgment, to alert us —only if we desire to understand his Word. If we reject Christ, the tables will turn against us.

The weeks mentioned by Daniel are weeks of years, and not weeks of days. This is nothing new, as previously the same rule applied to Jacob. Gen. 29:27–28.

No prophecy in the Old or the New Testament is as critical to understanding the end times as the four verses from Daniel 9:24–27. Remember, the Hebrew word translated as weeks (or sevens) refers to a period of seven years, like the English word decade refers to a period of ten years. It literally means 'a week of years'. So 70 weeks is 70 × 7 years or 490 years. This period is divided into three parts: seven weeks (49 years), 62 weeks (434 years), and one week (seven years), totalling 490 years.

Verse 24: 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. '

Once the 70 weeks have lapsed, then the Jewish nation will be blessed immensely. It could only be arbitrated through Christ and no one else. Israel will live under the umbrella of the new covenant, as all their offences and sins will be dealt with, and righteousness will reign in Jerusalem. The old covenant will be made redundant, as Christ is the end of the law. This new covenant was often cited by Jeremiah 31:31, and once the 2600 years have lapsed, they will share its blessings.

These 490 years ONLY concern the Jewish nation (Judah) and the city Jerusalem. Daniel was a Jew belonging to the tribe of Judah. The 70 weeks period that Daniel is speaking of DO NOT concern the Gentile nations. The Book of Revelation is mostly concerned with the time beyond Daniel's 70th week, or once Israel repents on the 'Day of the Lord'.
Verse 25: 'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. '
This verse confuses many Christians, and that is the reason why Daniel says: 'Know therefore and understand.' Daniel's 70-week period commences from the command to restore and build Jerusalem. It sets the time for Jesus' first coming to earth. When Daniel received this message from the angel Gabriel, Jerusalem was in ruins for nearly 70 years, and the Jews were captive in Babylon. There were 62 + 7 weeks of seven years, or 483 years, from the time when Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem until the Messiah appeared.
Nehemiah was troubled about the walls of Jerusalem, and God laid it on his heart to restore them. Jerusalem was defenceless and vulnerable. 'And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.' Neh. 1:3. The king noticed Nehemiah's concern, and he granted him the resources to repair the walls. It was the month Nisan 445 BC, during the 20th year of King Artaxerxes' reign; and then the clock started ticking for Judah.
Sir Robert Anderson, who retired in 1896, wrote a book The Coming Prince to unlock the secrets of Daniel's 70 weeks when he teamed up with the London Royal Observatory to discover that the prophetic years are 360 days in length and consist of 12 months of 30 days each. It makes sense, as then the 1260 days are 42 months or 3½ years. Therefore, the 70 weeks of Daniel span a 490-year period having 360 days each. He published this discovery in a book called The Coming Prince, a commentary on Daniel's 70th week. 483 years lapsed from the time when Nehemiah built the walls until the time when Jesus Christ rode on a donkey descending down the Mount of Olives with the shouts: 'Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.' Lk. 19:38. It was the only day in his life that he permitted his followers to proclaim him as Israel's King, fulfilling Daniel's prophecy to the day! However, as previously discussed, he held them accountable, not reckoning Daniel 9:24–27.
Jesus had to die, as he alone can accomplish our salvation. We can only imagine how different things would have been if Judah had accepted him as their Messiah and let him die for their sins, so he could steer them directly into the fold; but they refused and thus had to wait until the time of 'the everlasting righteousness'. But of course God knew they would not, so he had to do things the hard way. Do we realise what it means? It was not killing the Messiah that put the Jews at odds with God. After all, he came to die for them. No, it is not killing him. The reason is they refused the resurrected Christ, to prevent them from being 'born again' into a new creation.

Verse 26: ‘And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.’ Dan. 9:26. He shall be cut off ‘and have nothing’. At the end of the 69th week, nothing of Christ’s kingdom will be noticeable on earth. After the crucifixion, something strange happened: the heavenly clock stopped. Sixty-nine of the 70 weeks lapsed, and everything that was prophesied during those 483 years did come to pass, but they had one week left to go —lasting seven years.

Several times in the history of Israel, the clock stopped ticking for them. In the New Testament, we are also given hints that while God is dealing with the Church, the time stops ticking for Judah. Acts 15:13–18.

Presently the players are on the field, and they await the moment when the referee blows his whistle. If he does, the 70th week begins, and the players are the Jewish nation and the surrounding countries. At this moment the Gentiles are destroying the sanctuary, and God’s promises to David are on hold. I guess the players are prepared, but they need to wait for the rapture of the Church. Then the whistle will blow, and the 70th week of Daniel will commence, and once they are at play, we know who the winners are.

The clock stood still on the 10th Nisan, even before our Lord’s crucifixion, as Jesus was crucified on the 15th Nisan. Legally then, the Jews lived outside the ‘play time’ of Daniel’s 70 weeks, being sandwiched between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel. Officially, all the nations were responsible for the crucifixion of our Lord. The thorns on his head represent the laws of Moses. Moses directed the nation, and his mission commenced at the burning thorn bush. The law began with the burning thorn bush, and it ended when Jesus carried the curse of the law for us.

There are instances in Israel’s history when God totally ignored them, and we will discuss one of them. When Israel entered the land of Canaan, God did not calculate the years they worshipped ‘the foreign gods’, knowingly disobeying his commands. We noticed that during the time of the Judges, the Israelites lived many years in bondage when they served the neighbouring gods. Astonishingly, they totalled 114 years, and God did not reckon with them; thus the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1 are accurate. For them, they lived in the land of Canaan for 594 (480 + 114) years, but to God they were 480 years.

Verse 27: ‘And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.’ Dan. 9:27. Clearly there will be a covenant between the two parties. This verse acquaints us with what will happen at the beginning of the 70th week, the middle, and the end of Daniel’s 70th week.

After the rapture of the Church, our dispensation of grace will end, Eph. 2:6–7, and a new dispensation will commence. Even when Israel accepts the new covenant, as Jeremiah 31:31–34 promises, they will not enjoy the

same benefits the Church enjoys today. The relationship the Church has with the Lord is unique, never again to be relished in the coming ages. ‘He’ is a reference to ‘the ruler who will come’. He is previously mentioned in Dan. 7 & 8, and ‘he’ will confirm a seven-year covenant with Israel. It will spell the beginning of Daniel’s 70th week, endorsing a much-needed peace treaty.
The Jewish nation will make a covenant with the surrounding nations, and it will be sanctioned by the Antichrist. The Jewish people need to ensure a lasting peace treaty. The covenant spoken of here is not the old covenant God made with Moses, known by its weaknesses and uselessness. Heb. 7:18. To confirm the covenant is to give it weight. We find a similar example of the Hebrew word ‘covenant’ in Dan. 6:8–11, when the king was forced to endorse his own decree. Only a signature is needed to make it valid. It is an agreement between the Palestinian and the Zionist state. The treaty concerns Jerusalem, the boiling pot of the world today.
The following question is: Who are the ‘many’?
The agreement is not made with all the Jews but only with the Jewish state. Jerusalem is the centre of this agreement, and it will merge all the religions of the world. The plan is not to tear Jerusalem apart with a ‘two-state’ solution, but to share the city with all the religious powers.
In the middle of the week, or 3½ years later, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. The abomination causes the wrath of God to descend from heaven. It happened previously when Antiochus Epiphanes, a powerful Syrian king, attacked Jerusalem and entered the temple area in 168 BC. There he sacrificed pigs on the temple altar and erected a statue of the Greek god Zeus, and everyone had to revere it.
The abomination can also be interpreted as an idol. Jer. 7:30; 16:18 & 32:34. Throughout Daniel’s 70th week, the Jewish religion will be forbidden, and I am sure many Jews will not be bothered. At the end of the 70th week, an army coming from the north, with many compatriots, will invade and destroy the land of Israel. God permitted it to happen due to the idol or the ‘wings of abomination’ at Jerusalem. Daniel’s 70th week will end on the Day of the Lord.
At the end of the last 3½ years of the great tribulation, Michael, the archangel who is Christ, will personally save the remnant (from Judah) who repented. Presently our Lord is not troubled with the Jewish nation, but when they do call on his name, their persecution will end. Then the floodgates of God’s blessings will pour on each believing remnant in Judea and Israel.

The Wing of Abomination
The Jewish traditions are mentioned in Mark 7:3, when Jesus accused them of following the tradition of their elders. I believe the ‘sacrifices and offerings’ from Daniel 9:26 are the traditions of the elders—the Jewish religious practices as we know them today. We cannot assume there will be sacrifices (offerings) in Jerusalem. There are some disputes, but it does not bother me. As a substitute for the Jewish offerings, a wing of

abominations (an idol) will stand in the temple—a ‘wing’ of destruction. He will replace the Jewish customs in the middle of the week.
We can either opt for the ‘wing’ belonging to our Lord or Satan. Jesus spoke to the Jewish nation and said how often He longed to gather their children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but they refused Him (Luke 13:34). The only remaining option is for them to shelter under Satan’s wings, and it proves fatal. The end result is the total destruction and desolation of Jerusalem and its vicinity. It is reminiscent of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, who loathed the Jewish religion, when he placed something ‘vile’ in Jerusalem and offered pigs in the sanctuary to please the heathen gods (Daniel 11:22). God, in His fury, will prompt Gog and Magog to besiege Judah, to finally defeat the unbelievers.
The advice for the people living in Judah is to flee to the mountains—not the mountains in Judea, but somewhere further south, in Petra. There the Lord will reveal Himself, as all of Judah will be devastated. Our Lord said that from the beginning of creation until that time, there has never been a more devastating time in Israel’s history than then. It is a direct reference to the prophet Daniel:
‘At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book’ (Daniel 12:1).
The great tribulation will grip Judah, and it is generally known as the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). By far, it will be the most terrifying time in Israel’s history, worse than all the previous world wars. The phrase ‘at that time’ means that we are approaching the end of Daniel’s 70th week, which includes the last verses of Daniel 11. The great tribulation will commence for Judah once the idol stands in the sanctuary, and count yourself lucky if you have time to escape the nightmare. The people on the housetops must not even be tempted to enter their houses to collect their goods. With the greatest urgency, they need to run to escape the onslaught. Within seconds, Judah will be besieged!
We learned from Nicodemus in John 3 that we need to be born again to inherit eternal life. It is the only means to be part of the new creation in Christ, and if we refuse Him, we will die. The old needs to be done away with. Once we do, we relinquish our rights on earth, and our bread cannot be buttered on both sides. We cannot have the best of both worlds.

- With our Lord’s crucifixion, the entire earth was gripped by the old creation, and the great change occurred when our Lord rose from the dead. He rose as the Firstborn of a totally new creation.
- When we accept Christ as part of the Church, then we too are reckoned as firstborn in Christ.
- On the Day of the Lord, Judah and all of Israel will repent to be part of the new creation.
- At the end of the great tribulation, all the people on earth need to repent, or otherwise they will die at Armageddon—if not earlier during the great tribulation.

- Then all the inhabitants of the earth will be reborn to be part of the new creation in Christ. They will enter the Millennium.
- After the Great White Throne, the heavens and the earth will be replaced by a new heaven and earth to be totally part of the new. The old is done away with, and nothing belonging to the old will ever be seen or touched.
-

THE PROGRESSION OF THE NEW CREATION IN CHRIST

The Old creation as in the Old Testament

Christ Resurrection

Christ The Old Creation Doomed

The time of the Church

Christ and the Church Unbelieving World

The end of Daniel's 70th Week – THE DAY OF THE LORD

Christ, Church, Jewish nations and Israel Unbelieving World

The end of the 40 years tribulation period - ARMAGEDDON

Christ, Church, and all the LIVING accepts Christ Kingdom

The Old Creation - Doomed and there is no place found for them

The New Creation - They are totally part of the NEW!

What happens to Israel after the Day of the Lord?

- For the remainder of the great tribulation, they will be protected by God. It is like David eyeing Goliath at Babylon. Israel will be rebuilt slowly, and there is a 33-year time gap between the Day of the Lord and Armageddon. At the final battle at Armageddon, then each living person on earth is 'born again', enabling them to enter the Millennium.
- Judah and Israel will always be an example to the world, and each nation on earth needs to repent as Israel did on the Day of the Lord, as each nation and person needs to accept Christ. The Gospel will reach them via the 144,000 elect from Israel. Rev. 7:4. Their choice is vital, to decide to be either for or against Christ. If they refuse, they will perish.

I hope by now it is easier to understand the words our Lord spoke: 'Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved, but for the elect's sake, whom he has chosen, he has shortened those days.' Mark 13:20. It is an awkward verse to many believers, and if we don't understand that the 'elect' are the Jewish nations and there is a gap between the Day of the Lord, when Christ appears solely for Judah at the Mount of Olives, and Armageddon to defeat Babylon, then we are at a loss for words.

Today God’s elect is the Church, but after the rapture of the Church, when the Church disappears to heaven, then the Jewish nations will be God’s elect. For them the days will be shortened. The great tribulation will last 3½ years for Judah, but for the remainder of the world the tribulation will continue, and most of the Book of Revelation deals with the 33-year period or the one generation. Matthew 24 and 25 depict the future events in a timely order, commencing with Daniel's 70th week, followed by Christ's return for Judah on the Mount of Olives. 24:29. Afterwards the chapter speaks of a generation 24:34 until He will reappear in Matthew 25 – at Armageddon. It corresponds with the climax of the Book of Revelation. The great tribulation will commence with the Jewish nations, and it will end for them once they repent on the Day of the Lord. However, the great tribulation will continue for all the other nations of the world, and from the Book of Revelation 8 onwards, it details theirs. The remaining nations need to bear the brunt of the many judgements – e. g. the trumpets and vials.

It is impossible to find a clear reference to such a period in Scripture. We need to agree that there ought to be at least a few years between Israel’s repentance on the ‘Day of the Lord’ and the defeat of all the heathen nations at Armageddon. I am sure that somehow we can find such a time; especially when studying the life history of Joseph, Moses, David and Thomas. You can study my notes on the Book of Revelation.

Matthew 24 & 25 is the backbone of all prophecies, and the reason for it is obvious. It was recited by our Lord. Everything is ‘set out’ in a timely fashion, commencing with the events during Daniel's 70th week, then follows the Day of the Lord. 24:29–33. His angels are sent out to gather from all the 12 tribes of Israel, v. 31 the 144,000. They have a definite mission to fulfil before they enter the Millennium.

The previously cursed fig tree will bud and start growing again. Jesus is talking about a generation from Israel who did repent on the ‘Day of the Lord’. They will evangelise the world during the 33-year period, live throughout the Millennium, to survive until the last day. Then they will enter the new heaven and earth. They will easily outlive Adam!

Verses 35 & 36 concern the events adjoining the last day, when the old heaven and earth is destroyed to be replaced by the new. God alone knows when that would be. It is after the Millennium when Satan is loosed. Then he will be vigorously busy to prepare an army, to war against Christ, as highlighted in Ezekiel 38. That will be the final straw or the last war the remnant of the earth will ever experience before entering the new creation.

All the events from Matthew 24:37 to 25:46 only concern the 33-year period, when the true believers will be segregated from the unbelievers. From 24:37 to 42, Christ will possibly make Himself known at Petra, on the Mount Hor where Aaron died. There they will regroup and all the tribes of Israel will be gathered there. They will mourn once they realise who Christ is. From Petra, they will follow the kingly highway to Jerusalem and Christ will journey ahead of them. Upon their arrival at Jerusalem, Christ will depart again to revisit them once the 33-year period lapses. Then He will defeat the Gentile nations at Armageddon.

Once the 33-year period commences, He will give His people many talents, and they are told to be patient and obedient, to toil with their money, to be rewarded handsomely.
The 33-year period is comparable to the time when Noah lived on earth. When we study Genesis 6:1–4 we discover that there used to be giants on earth; a breed of people not known to us today, but we do have their skeletal remains. The fallen angels (sons of God) that were cast down to earth married our daughters. Those sort of sexual affairs were familiar before the deluge. God will allow it to happen once more and Satan is sanctioned to do whatever he pleases on earth. His devices are known to us, but they will falter.
Once the great tribulation ends, the unbelievers will be ‘cut off’ or else they will be ‘taken away’.
To the unbelieving world, our Lord will appear to them as a thief in the night. 24:42. At the end of the 40-year (7 & 33) tribulation period, Christ's Kingdom will unsettle every nation on earth. He will stun His enemies with no prior warning. The reason is the evil forces ignore the prophecies, like the people in Noah’s time who were ignorant of the impending judgement. At Armageddon, the Lord will descend on them like a thief, with no warning. 2 Peter 3:10. The invading armies from Babylon will be slain at Armageddon.
At the end of the 40 years of tribulation, the Lord will physically remove the unbelievers from the earth, unlike the believing remnant who will continue living on earth to enjoy the Millennium.
‘Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord.’ Psalm 104:35.
The disobedient people will die and vanish. There is a clear divide in the following verses:

The message is clear. The believers will enter the Millennium, and the nonbelievers will vanish and die. They ridiculed the message of the 144,000 men chosen by God.
Luke 21:20–24
There are many notable differences between Luke and the other Gospels. Luke focuses on the imminent destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, in the year 70 A. D. , whereas both Mark 13 and Matthew 24 mainly focus on the final destruction of Jerusalem during the great tribulation.
The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Mark 13 & Luke 21) answers two basic questions about the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Lord’s coming at the end of the age.
Jesus draws the disciples' attention to the Jerusalem they can see standing, but there will be a final siege of Jerusalem, which is future. Both Mark and Matthew look ahead to a greater fulfilment in the distant future. The key passage that speaks mainly of the siege in the year 70 A. D. is found in Luke 21:20–24. Once we study them, we will find some notable differences between the siege in 70 A. D. by the Romans as written in the Gospel of Luke, and the siege during the great tribulation. Mark 13 & Matt. 24. Let me explain:

- ‘But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.’ Lk. 21:20.
- The similarity of the two Gospels is that the destruction of Jerusalem causes ‘desolation,’ and an army will surround Jerusalem on both occasions, but the differences are that during the great tribulation the abomination of desolation referred to by Daniel 9:27 will stand in the holy place or the temple. In 70 A. D. the temple was destroyed without any stone standing upon the other. In the latter half of Daniel’s 70th week, the image of the beast will stand in the temple, meaning it was not destroyed 1260 days prior to the ‘Day of the Lord’. Rev. 13:2; 2 Thess. 2.
- ‘Then let them who are in Judea flee to the mountains, etc.’ Lk. 21:21.
- The similarities are obvious, as on both occasions they need to flee Jerusalem and Judea.
- ‘For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.’ Lk. 21:22.
- The similarity is that God will keep His Word concerning His promised judgment. The difference is that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. was followed by the ‘vengeance’ of God, and the Jewish people disappeared in Egyptian captivity. In contrast, on the Day of the Lord, God will rescue the Jews. Jer. 30:7.
- ‘But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that nurse children in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.’ Lk. 21:23.
- There are obvious similarities as God’s wrath and judgment will characterise both tribulation periods. The difference is Luke does not say that the ‘great distress’ they experienced in 70 A. D. is not the greatest distress the world has ever known. In contrast, the great tribulation is the greatest distress humankind has experienced since Adam.
- ‘And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.’ Lk. 21:24.

The similarity is as Jerusalem was under Roman domination in 70 A. D. , likewise Jerusalem will be under the domination of ‘the beast’. Rev. 13. The obvious difference is that the Jews in 70 A. D. were led away captive, dispersing to all nations, but during the great tribulation, they will be regathered from all nations of the world, to be restored in their own land. Matt. 24:31. In 70 A. D. Jerusalem was trodden down by the Gentiles, a situation that still exists today, but when Christ comes at the end of the tribulation period, then the times of the Gentiles will end. Dan. 2:44–45. Most Christians teach us that Christ’s coming referred to in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 does not refer to His coming at the end of the age, but rather it mentions Him coming in judgment in 70 A. D. , even though no one actually saw Him coming at that time! They accuse us of teaching the rapture, but cunningly they teach a ‘secret coming’ in judgment, seen by no one! It creates moral problems. If the ‘great tribulation’ of Matthew 24 is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, then how can the

destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. be equated with our Lord's coming? Matthew 24 teaches us specifically that our Lord's coming will happen AFTER the great tribulation, or the time of Jacob's trouble.
Matthew 23:39 says clearly that the Jewish nation will not see the Lord Jesus again until they say; 'Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.' This means that He will not come until the nation repents. Since the nation did not repent in the year 70 A. D. , Christ did not come at that moment in time. Matthew 24:30 says explicitly they will SEE the Son of man coming.

Mark 13:21–23
And then if anyone should say to you, Behold, here is the Christ, or, Behold, he is there, do not believe him; 22 for false Christs and false prophets shall rise and shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if possible, even the elect. 23 But take ye heed; behold, I have told you everything beforehand.
Today many people claim to be the antichrist and there will be even more claims during the great tribulation. Remember when our Lord appears at the Mount of Olives, only a small remnant of people will see Him briefly, and the unbelieving people will die. Christ will only be seen by the believing remnant, and no unbelieving person will see Him and live. On the quiet, Satan and his many angels and demons will lead the people astray doing many miracles, to finally wage war against the Anointed. Don't be side-tracked by his miracles – Christ warned us He will allow Satan to deceive the people.

Mark 13:24–27
But in those days after that affliction, the sun shall darken, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then shall he send his angels and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth unto the uttermost part of the heaven.
The climax of Judah's tribulation (after their affliction 24) is dreadful, and then the Lord will appear. On that awful day the sun and the moon will be darkened, and the heavens will be shaken, striking the world with many meteorites. You remember the one they had at Russia, known as the Chelyabinsk meteor event of 15 February 2013, which exploded with 20–30 times more energy than was released from the atomic bomb detonated at Hiroshima. The word 'day' in Hebrew or in the Greek language can be translated as judgement; and similarly in our own English language. On that 'Day' many things will be brought to light, and all the earth's wickedness will be exposed. That 'day' of judgement will last until the world enters the Millennium. The Day of the Lord is mentioned 27 times in the Old Testament, and is known as the pinnacle of Judah's and Israel's sufferings.
It will be easy to mark that day, unlike any other day they experienced in the past. The heavenly bodies will shake. It is not like the 'red moon' some

people speak of today – it is much worse. Twelve times the sun and the moon are cited in the Old and the New Testament, when it addresses the 'Day of the Lord'.
Whenever in the Bible it says the sun and moon will be darkened – then we know where we are in God's prophetic calendar. They all deal with the same event – It will be so spectacular and frightening – something impossible to forget. The stars will fall on earth and the Book of Zechariah 14:6, 7 says on that day it should have been evening and the sun should have set in the horizon, but it didn't. It is easier to explain the difficult prophecies if we are prepared to study the events before and after the Day of the Lord, when the sun and moon are darkened. Then many passages will make more sense. Whenever in the Scriptures it speaks of the heavens that are shaken, or the stars in the sky that are rolled up like a scroll, we know we are dealing with the 'Day of the Lord'. Constantly we need to compare Scripture with Scripture and I wish to compare the Book of Mark, Joel and the Book of Revelation. The obvious tie is the Day of the Lord, when the heavenly bodies are shaken.
The Book of Joel mentions the heavenly bodies frequently 2:10, 2:31, 3:15 and the main theme of the Book is the 'Day of the Lord'. An army will besiege and invade Israel and they were never mentioned before by their prophets. The fiercest army on earth will confront Israel. They were unheard of in the Old Testament, and they will descend from the north. Their capital is Moscow, and it lies directly north of Israel. Joel 2:20. On that day an army will invade Israel like a swarm of locusts devouring the land. They are like horsemen, who run, 2:4 sounding like the noise of chariots, and they will leap. 2:5. Their tanks will level the houses, and they will not break their ranks. 2:7. God will overwhelm the army invading Israel from the Mediterranean Sea, and heading towards the Dead Sea, God will slaughter them. The stench of their rotting bodies will rise over the land. 2:20.
The Lord will save the remnant when He appears on the Mount of Olives, to cause a passage through the split Mount of Olives – leading them along the eastern fringes of the Dead Sea to Petra. There is a happy ending. The desert will bloom again having an early and a late rain. 2:23. All the rivers in Judah will flow. 3:18. He will pour out His Spirit on all Judah and Israel. 2:28–29.
In the Book of Revelation we find that the 7 seals, trumpets, and bowls are coupled to each other. The seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets. 8:1–5. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th seals are known as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The first seal acquaints the world with the white horse to picture peace, and the antichrist. 6:1–2. He will be known as a peace broker, to make an end of all the warmongering we experience today. His true character will surface once the first 1260 days of Daniel's 70th week is fulfilled. In the latter half of Daniel's 70th week, or the last 1260 days of Daniel, then the last of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th seals 6:3–6 will trigger a war, famine and a plague. The 5th seal tells us of those who were martyred for their faith in Christ, but they need to be patient and wait another 33 years before they can enter the Millennium. 6:9–11.

When the 6th and the 7th seals are opened, a devastating earthquake occurs, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth causing terrible devastation. 6:12–14. By now we know where we are on God's calendar! We are on the Day of the Lord, making it possible to tie this event to many other Old Testament prophecies.

In the following chapter 7:4 we read of a number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. Then all the Israelites will be gathered, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel, and don't deem it impossible thinking God will not fulfil His promises. The 144,000 are the evangelists who will preach the Gospel to every nation on earth, allowing the nations a 33-year window period to repent. It corresponds to the words of Christ: 'And then shall He send his angels and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth unto the uttermost part of the heaven.' 13:27. I believe the angels are the Church who will be actively involved during the great tribulation. The Church will disappear before the great tribulation, never to experience its horrors as many Christians believe. Our duty is to oversee and steer the events of the great tribulation from a heavenly perspective.

We reached the end of the great tribulation and complete Israel and Jerusalem is devastated and flattened to the ground. The remnant will not return to a glorious Israel as Joshua did in the past with Israel. No, there will be a mammoth task ahead to cleanse the land. The main chore is for the following 7 months, to bury the dead. Then it is the fitting time for the people of the world to pray for the peace at Jerusalem. During the following 33 years our Lord will not be seated on the throne at Jerusalem, as he returned to heaven and His servants need to work hard. It is like David at Jerusalem opposing Goliath at Babylon. As we, they too need to prove their sincerity. Christ will reappear 33 years later at Armageddon.

Revelation 8 commences relatively quietly saying:

'When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.' Rev. 8:1.

I believe the half an hour does portray the half year it will take to seal the 144,000 servants. In the previous chapter it says John saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land, sea or on any tree. Rev. 7:1. The tree portrays the nations of the world, like the tree in Daniel 4, reaching the skies. There is a respite for the Gentile nations, a quiet moment before the storm. Nothing is harmed on earth until the 144,000 witnesses are sealed. Once the servants are sealed and they preach the Gospel to all the nations of the world, then the flood gates of God's fury will open.

It takes time to regroup as a nation and God will fulfil His promises when He regathers all the 12 tribes of Israel. Strangely Ephraim is not mentioned amongst the 144,000 elect, but Joseph his father is named. The possible reason is that Ephraim is part of the Church and thus they had their mission as the true firstborn.

The tribe of Dan is missing and there is a possible reason. Throughout the Old Testament history, we discover that Dan had an exploring spirit – they

were always the first to conquer as mentioned in the latter chapters of the Book of Joshua. It became even more evident later in Israel's history. The tribe of Dan, more than any other of the 'lost ten tribes of Israel', left its 'signature' wherever it migrated or journeyed to. They named the rivers, mountains, lakes, villages, towns, bays, and cities after the name of their ancestor – Dan. Therefore their migratory route is easy to follow, involving north-western Europe, and the world. Once they conquered the land, the other tribes of Israel were sure to follow. The tribe of Dan is naturally attracted to the water and the sea – and they had the spirit of a Viking. So we find the river Danube, could it be named by Dan? Four rivers flowing into the Black Sea are named by him. We also have the river Don in Russia, and Doncaster in the United Kingdom. The name keeps on reappearing as 'Danzig' on the Baltic coast, now called Gdansk, retaining the name 'Dan'. Finally we have Denmark and especially Ireland have many places named by the tribe.

Surely it takes lots of effort and time to teach the 144,000 elect and the bulk of the tribes have the mission to fulfil to reach the ends of the earth. I believe the 144,000 task will be to preach the Gospel and the tribe of Dan to renovate Israel. They are born explorers and it's in their blood. Then all the rivers of Israel will be blessed and they will flow again to make the country fertile. They have 33 years' time limit until the Millennium. Christ's 'angels' will have the task to regather the 144,000 elect from the ends of the earth.

Who are His elect? The elect today is the Church and the believing Israel after the rapture of the Church. The 12 tribes of Israel are scattered across the world and miraculously they will be gathered. I have no clue how things are planned, but the 'angels' will make it possible.

Looking ahead to the future, I am sure the days following the Jews' repentance, the 10 lost tribes of Israel will repent to join Judah at Petra. Once they do, countries like Denmark may avoid the great tribulation. The purpose of the great tribulation is to make the people decide if they are either for or against Christ. God will only punish an unbelieving nation. Moses was aware of our time of waiting and he prophesied in Deuteronomy 29:29:

'The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever. '

The Apostle Paul wrote to us today saying in Ephesians 3:9 that God made known to us the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God. The Book of Deuteronomy says in the following verse that Israel will be scattered throughout the world, but God will gather them, once our dispensation ended with the rapture.

'And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations, where the LORD your God has driven you, 2 And shall return unto the LORD your God, and shall obey his voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul; 3 That then the LORD your God will return you from captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and gather you from all the nations, where the LORD your God has

scattered you. 4 If any of you are driven out unto the farthest parts of the earth, from there will the Lord your God gather you, and from there will he bring you.’ Dt. 30:1–4.
It was prophesied 3250 years ago, and today God knows where His elect are and leave the task to Him – He will gather them.
Who are the angels who are employed with the mammoth task? The angels is possibly a metaphor for the Church who will rule with Christ in heaven.
The angels are God’s messengers and there is no reason why the Church are not part of God’s plan. Romans 11 v. 31 says the immediate effect of the unbelief of the Jews was to confer the promised salvation to the Gentiles, and in return they will secure the preaching of the Gospel to the Jews. Each party should thus cause salvation to come to the other - the Jews to the Gentiles by their unbelief; but the Gentiles, in their turn, to the Jews by their belief. In a grand manner the Church (as the angels or God’s messengers) will gather the Jewish nations, assisting them in every way.
The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greeks. Rom. 1:16. What does Paul mean, ‘To the Jew first’? What kind of priority, what kind of ‘firstness’ do they have? Why is it mentioned? What effect will it have on us?
This could be prophetic as during the great tribulation, the Jewish people are the first nation to repent and the Church will be instrumental. We as the Church have a great responsibility towards Israel. We will preach the Word of God to appear to them as His angels. There are many verses to sustain it. As an example the last verse in Obadiah 1:21 says: ‘Saviours (in plural) will go up on Mount Zion to judge.’ There is a great debate who they are but I believe the verse looks ahead to the end time. The theme of the Book of Obadiah is the Day of the Lord. In the one chapter – the word day appears 12 times. Thus the ‘salvation’ spoken of here is tied to the time when the Jewish nations repent.
Daniel 11:33 addresses the end times and then a verse appears out of the blue, and many have no clue who the wise are: ‘Those who are wise will instruct many.’ Are they the angels? Verse 35 ‘says and some of the wise will fall,’ and I believe they will fall accompanied with great power from heaven, as the older Hebrew translations suggest, and the reason is to instruct the Jewish nations. It is easy to recognise Daniel 12:3 ‘Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.’ We will instruct them with the Word of God.
Revelation 12 discusses the bond between the woman and her son. The son is Christ with the Church who are in heaven, and verse 6 says they are Michael and His angels who fought against the dragon, and his angels. Obviously the angels are the members of the Church who are in heaven. Verse 14 says the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, to be taken care of for 1260 days, to be protected and placed outside the serpent’s reach. The Church are here portrayed as the wings of the eagle to help the distraught Israel at Petra.

Who is Michael the Archangel in Daniel and Revelation 12? Is He really Christ? There are only five references to Michael the Archangel and the translated name Michael in Hebrew is ‘who is like God’. He is to stand up to defend Daniel's people, the Jewish nations, a ‘protector’ of His people Israel.
Moreover, Revelation 12 deals with the perspective of Satan and the Jewish nations. After the rapture of the Church, Satan will be hurled down to earth to never occupy the heavens again. In a vision the dragon dragged a third of the stars in the sky, and he flung them to the earth. He stood in front of the woman (Israel) when she was about to give birth, ready to devour her child when it is born. On the dragon's head, he had the 12 stars and they are the 12 wheels or the signs of the Zodiac – better known today as the horoscope. Satan wanted to prevent the rapture of the Church, but it proved impossible. As the child (Christ with the Church) is born, they are swept away to heaven, and it happened with the rapture of the Church. The woman (Israel) will remain on earth and they will soak the fury of the dragon. It is like a cable car – when the one car rises, the other one goes down. We will have a glimpse of Satan in mid-air.
I will summarize and try to simplify the events in the Book of Revelation using the following chart.
From Revelation 8 we are dealing with the remaining nations of the world, and they too need to repent as Israel or else they will die. The 7th seal are the ‘contents’ of the seven trumpets. 8:1–5. Demonic entities will roam our world and God’s anger will descend on them and also the unbelieving nations. However if any nation does repent during the 33-year period, they will be immune to God’s wrath as Israel, and any nation who repents throughout the 33 years period will be employed by God to fight Babylon at Armageddon. The last enemy or nation to succumb to God’s wrath is Babylon at Armageddon. Then we are at the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation.

Mark 13:28–32
Learn the similitude from the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender and puts forth leaves, ye know that summer is near; 29 so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is near, even at the doors. 30 Verily I say unto you that this generation shall not pass until all these things are done. 31 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. 32 But of that day and that hour no one knows, no, not even the angels who are in heaven, neither the Son, but only the Father.
The budding fig tree is relatively unknown, certainly an awkward parable to explain. It must be read in its framework, of reborn Israel returning to Israel. In the Bible we have a wild fig tree bearing no fruit and a fertile fig tree bearing much fruit. Here we are dealing with a fig tree that used to be cursed as part of the old covenant, but once Israel repents, the same tree will bear much fruit.
‘As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you will know that the summer is near.’ The fig tree cannot blossom while Israel is in disbelief and in no way does it point to either 1917, 1948 or 1967, when

the Jews returned to Israel. It portrays a time when Israel will repent on the Day of the Lord and then the fig tree will bud.
Israel had been set aside for 2,000 years with no signs of life: no leaves, no bud, no sap, no bloom and no real fruit, totally barren. But, even though the tree of Israel appears dead outwardly, the roots are alive. Like a dormant volcano, there is life underneath. Many events today make us believe the end of the age is nearing. Our Lord says that the generation at the end time will certainly not pass away until everything elapses.
One of the first mentioned trees in the Bible is the fig tree when Adam and Eve used the leaves to cover themselves. v. 7. The fig tree mirrors Israel as part of the law, the 4th dispensation of the law. It portrays our works as part of the old creation.
There seems to be many opinions regarding the fig tree and when did it bud? Most students have no idea which generation our Lord is talking about, and what triggered the budding of the fig tree?
The fig tree was dormant in the winter (2000 years) and when you see it putting forth its leaves, then you know that summer is imminent even at the very door and the generation that sees the budding of the fig tree shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled. Matt. 24:32–36.
The parable of the fig tree is all about the rebirth of Israel, and the tree is lifeless during our dispensation, when the Jewish nations ridicule our Lord – there is no life in an unbelieving nation. Once the Jewish nations repent, then the tree will bud to absorb the sap coming from its roots. It will bud, bloom to finally bear fruit.
The parable of the fig tree puzzles almost all Christians who believe in the rapture. They assume Daniel's 70th week addresses all the nations of the world, and on the Day of the Lord, the believers will enter the Millennium. How wrong as Daniel says clearly the 70th week is addressed to ONLY the Jewish people and Jerusalem. It’s wrong to open your neighbour's post!
The Day of the Lord does not span 1 day, but possibly another 33 years, known as the great tribulation. It will continue until all the other nations of the world repent. Judah only had a foretaste of things to come.
Logic tells us there ought to be a time gap between Revelation 7, when the 144,000 people are sealed, until the people of the earth enters the Millennium in Revelation 20. At most it is 33 years, and the great tribulation is 40 (33+7) years. Once the Jewish nations repent, the fig tree will 'bud', and it will be weighed down by the fruit bending the branches. We speak of a considerable time before it bears fruit, when Israel and the world is ready to enter the Millennium.
What is the objective of the fig tree? Its leaves or its fruit? Certainly its fruits and they are the fruits our Lord desired from the Jewish people and Israel. Their goal is to spread the Gospel to all the ends of the world and again they will be known as a nation of kings and priests. Once they do, the end is near.
‘So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is near, even at the doors.’ 29. Our Lord speaks of a ‘generation’ who will experience the Day of the Lord and also when the present heaven is supplanted by the new.
‘This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be done.’ 30.

In this interpretation, Jesus is talking about a generation who will experience the end of the world, and He is not speaking about a generation who lived during Jesus' time. Thus, the generation that sees the beginning of the fulfilment of the end-time prophecies will live to see and experience the events at the Great White Throne on the 'last day', when heaven and earth will pass away. The many signs that will be stretched out for more than 1000 years.
Is that possible?
Isaiah says during the Millennium an infant will not die a few days old, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. Isa. 65:20.
Christ will reign on earth for 1000 years and then an unbelieving 100-year-old person will die as a child. Throughout the Millennium all the people born need to accept Christ and His authority, or else they will die. The believers who experienced the Day of the Lord will not die during the Millennium, and they will be older than Adam. During the Millennium, Satan is tied in a bottomless pit, incapable to deceive the nations, but the true nature of Adam will surface, and many will refuse Christ.
At the end of the Millennium Satan will be released from the bottomless pit Rev. 20:7 and then he will have the opportunity to gather all the unbelieving people to rebel against Jesus Christ.
Afterwards our Lord speaks of ‘that day that no-one knows except the Father in heaven.’ 32. Fire coming from heaven will devour them on the 'last day' - the last judgment on earth before the new heavens and earth appears. Then ‘that generation’ will receive a new body when the new heaven and earth appears. They will not die – but they will be changed in a split second. Thus they are a very special generation.
With the rapture of the Church, all the believers will be caught up to heaven, and then every individual on earth will be dealt with as unbelievers, except for the 2 witnesses from Revelation 11. If any Jew in Israel does accept Christ during the great tribulation, then that generation will experience the following events.

- In the first half of Daniel's 70th week, the believers from the Jews need to flee to Petra.
- The believers during the second half of Daniel's 70th week are told to remain at Jerusalem or Israel, or else they will be killed.
- On the Day of the Lord the believer’s will flee Jerusalem via a split Mount of Olives, to escape to Petra.
- Christ will meet them at Petra and the 144000 believers are sealed to preach the Gospel.
- The fig tree will bud and Christ will return to heaven as on ascension day.
- The remaining world experience the fury of the great tribulation, and once a nation repents, the tribulation will cease for them.
- With the battle of Armageddon, Christ will return and the last nation to surrender to Him is Babylon.
- All living people on earth needs to accept Christ or else they will die.
- Fruit on the fig tree, that budded earlier in the season

- The Millennium commences.
- The unbelievers will die as a young children, 100 years old.
- Satan released after 1000 years.
- The unbelievers will be assembled by Satan to war against Christ.
- Fire from heaven will devour them and that final judgement day is totally unknown, except for God in heaven.
- The 'last day' of our present world or the great white throne.
- The new heavens and earth.
- That generation will be changed to receive a new body.

Mark 13:33–37
Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time shall be. 34 As the man who, taking a far journey, left his house and gave his estate to his slaves and to each one his responsibility and commanded the porter to watch. 35 Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the Lord of the house comes: at evening or at midnight or at the cockcrowing or in the morning, 36 lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you, I say unto all: Watch.
But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Saviour. Mic. 7:7 Somehow, I think Micah knew of our long time of waiting and our Lord also warned us to be diligent when we await His return. Common sense tells us if we have nothing meaningful to wait for, we will soon lose heart. The great hope inside of us keeps the fire going. We will not be swayed by the scoffers who asked the early Christians, ‘What happened to Christ’s promised coming?’ 2 Pet. 3 The scoffers who taunted the early Christians knew they longed for Jesus’s return and besides, the Apostle Paul said the Church longed for His return. 1 Thess. 1:10; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28 The early Christians thought they would see Him returning, and someone spread rumours that Christ returned but He left in disgust. It unsettled many Christian communities.
‘Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.’ 2 Thess. 2:1But here we are almost 2,000 years later. Should it surprise anyone if the world continues to ridicule us, thinking we as Christians have put this hope on the shelf? The teaching of Christ’s return for us, or the rapture of the Church, is vital to the hope inside of us. To take this ‘hope’ out of the equation of our salvation is to nullify the expectation that each of us nurtured in Christ. The hope the early Apostles were talking about is to receive a glorified body, to be with Him forever.
Once we lose that expectation, His return can become an afterthought instead of the focus. What do you think the early disciples were rejoicing about after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended back to the Father? Why did they rejoice and sing hymns in prison? Did they expect the imminent return of Christ, to be united with Him in glory? No, their real joy is to know they are totally part of the new creation in Christ, and knew if they were killed, in that split second they will be glorified with Him in heaven. Part of Christ's design in this ‘waiting period’ is to compel us to

live by faith. Do we believe He will return for us or not? Or have we resigned ourselves to the fact that it will probably be the next generation or two, down the road? The tactics of our enemy are to target our hope in Christ. We can hear the world asking us if He's forgotten us, and is He really bothered about our welfare?

It’s the propaganda the false teachers and scoffers use, to divert our eyes of faith from the heavenly realities of Christ's return, to place them on the things we can see. We need to set our hearts on things above. Col. 3:1–4 To set your heart and mind is to set your hope firmly on things that will not disappoint us. Trials and tribulations are real but we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and no one can ruin our inheritance in heaven. 1 Pet. 1:3, 4

Scoffers and those without faith boast of an edge in their teachings because they can point to reality. It baffles many Christians who find it hard to resist the temptations of wealth, thinking it will satisfy the ‘vacuum’ in their lives. To resist temptations defies their logic, but true logic is exactly what our Lord wants us to consider. Who are you going to trust? The scoffers who haven't got a clue, or the power of Christ’s resurrection working within us?

It seems that God allows us to experience many disappointments in life to teach us that nothing in life will truly satisfy us or provide us with a firm foundation to stand upon. God’s Word alone is unshakable. We can wait for the Lord knowing that, no matter how dark the night is, His light will break through at dawn.

The greatest battle we have while waiting is our anxiety. Voices of doubt keep telling us, ‘What if this happens?’ Jesus promised He will never leave or forsake us. That’s a promise to sustain us while we wait for His triumphant return! If our hope is set on this life, on the things that gratify our flesh, it will frustrate us immensely, dumping us in despair. Jesus Christ came to offer us eternal joy and freedom from sin, even though we cannot escape the ‘vice-like’ grip sin has over our world. While we watch and wait, our hearts are always encouraged to know that the best is yet to come! One day sin will be no more!

Three times in this chapter our Lord spurs us to be watchful knowing many will be impatient and lose heart. Our dispensation is complex and each individual Christian is reckoned as a steward, having a personal responsibility towards Christ, and it’s not a collective responsibility. How do we use the freedom we have in Christ? He cites the parable of the doorkeeper to arouse us. The Olivet Discourse has many similar parables. The many parables of our Lord are like detective stories, filled with half-hidden truths, challenging us to a mystery hunt. The hidden treasures hide the simple truths of our dispensation of grace, to enlighten our hearts; to know the hope of His calling, and our glorious inheritance in Christ right now. Eph. 1:18To receive a full reward, we need to be alert and awake. We are the doorkeepers and have a great responsibility, and if we are not on the alert, the false teachers and scoffers will enter to lead the flock astray and have the better of us. The master will return and what a disappointment if he finds us sleeping. We have a great responsibility and I believe the closer we are to Christ’s return, the more difficult it is to

maintain our faith. Thus we need to remain vigilant, and remain in His work even if we deem Christ’s return is tomorrow. Martin Luther said, ‘If I knew that tomorrow was the end of the world, I would plant an apple tree today!’ Whatever happens to the world today, we have a mission.
The parables our Lord spoke in the week before His crucifixion have a special import and have one thing in common. The master of the house will depart and to each individual person will be entrusted with a special duty in his house. Certainly he will return to reward them accordingly. I will mention two well-known parables.
The Kingdom of Heaven will be like the ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom. Five foolish bridesmaids went to meet the groom with lamps but forgot the oil; five were wise and brought both lamp and oil. The bridesmaids fell asleep, and the bridegroom returned when they least expected him. Only those prepared, having oil, did join him; the five who had no oil were not invited.
In the parable of the ten talents, Jesus instructs his disciples on the matter of stewardship.
Even though he travelled to a far country, he will return and call his servants into account for how they have handled the blessings that were entrusted to them. To those who made the most out of their stewardship, he will reward them as good and faithful servants by admitting them into the joy of their lord. He who bears no fruit, however, can only anticipate a conviction of laziness and wickedness and a punishment in the outer darkness.
Directly after the parables were told, Jesus says the moment He returns he will separate the people on his left and right. Those on his right will go into everlasting joy or the Millennium and those on His left are punished.
These parables came at the very climax of Jesus' ministry, just after He silenced the Pharisees from asking Him any more questions. He publicly rebuked them seven times for their self-righteousness. He was trying to steer Israel out of their confidence in the law and their works.
The wise virgins are the people who departed from the darkness and entered into the light of the new covenant. The five foolish virgins had not made themselves ready as they had no oil—they didn't have the Spirit or the new covenant. They were the Jewish nation relying on the law.
In these parables, Jesus teaches several things about the Millennial Kingdom and the time leading up to it. Jesus’ most basic point is that the kingdom was not going to appear immediately. There would be a time of waiting, and then the king will be absent, before the kingdom would be set up.
The only means to make sense of these parables is to acknowledge that after the Day of the Lord, Christ will ascend to heaven and He will return within 33 years, to reward His servants.
Then it will make more sense to understand the differences between the parable of the ten pounds (minas) and the ten talents. Some people assume that they are the same parable, but there are enough differences to warrant a distinction: the parable of the pounds was told on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem; Luke 19:11 and the parable of the talents was told later on the Mount of Olives.

The parable of the pounds deals with two classes of people: servants and enemies; the parable of the talents deals only with professed servants. In the parable of the pounds, each servant receives the same amount; in the parable of the talents, each servant receives a different amount.
The backdrop of the parable of the talents is Matthew 25, when our Lord appears at Armageddon, to entrust His servants with the talents. Most assuredly He will return 33 years later with a reward. Reborn Israel received their talents, to be rewarded for the work they did between the Day of the Lord and His appearing at Armageddon. Soon after the Day of the Lord at Petra, the Lord will entrust them with the talents, and then their real belief is judged. The fake believers will be judged and they will not enter the Millennium.
The parable of the pounds concerns the Church or our dispensation of grace and it is not part of the Olivet Discourse. It concerns the true believers of our dispensation and the servant who did not perform was part of His kingdom, but he was not rewarded, found naked. The little he had was entrusted to the other believers who performed. The enemies who rejected the king in the parable of the pounds are the Jewish nation who reject Christ, or anyone who still denies Him today.
In the parable of the talents, the unfaithful servant proved he was opposed to Christ and His kingdom, and he will die.
Throughout the 33-year period, the true believers need to be patient, as in our dispensation lasting nearly 2,000 years. Yes, the new believers who trusted Christ on the Day of the Lord—they too need to ‘watch’ and not sleep at the door, as in the parable of the door-keeper.
I will try to explain this in the following graph.
We cannot hasten Christ’s return from heaven. The Crusaders thought 1,000 years ago they could speed Christ’s return, conquering Jerusalem. The Crusaders who were ‘secular Christians’ attempted to reclaim the land the Muslims had conquered, but it ended in disappointment. It is no different today, as many Christian Zionists today support the Zionist cause, the return of the Jewish people to Israel. They believe the return of the Jews to Israel is in line with a biblical prophecy, necessitating Christ’s return to earth as its king. This is no argument, as the only guarantee of Christ’s return is once the Jewish people call on the name of Jehovah, then it is the guaranteed return of Christ Jesus. Malachi prophesied and said: ‘They shall build, but I will throw down.’ Mal. 1:4 Jerusalem as it is known today will be levelled to the ground before our Lord returns. In the heat of the great tribulation, they will call on His Name and then the tables will turn and there will be a real revival amongst all the tribes of Israel. No earthquakes, blood moons or a temple on the Mount Moriah are an argument to guarantee Christ’s return.
The exception is the rapture of the Church, the only event prior to Israel’s repentance on the Day of the Lord.
When Christ returns, His first mission is to gather His servants. Christ will not remain with them all the time and He will leave them for a brief period, to reward them accordingly.

‘It is like a man, travelling to another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, and to each one his work, and also commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch.
’The master who travelled to another country in this parable is Christ who returned to heaven, to reappear many years later at the battle of Armageddon. He will leave His servants in charge. To each of them a task is given and they are rewarded accordingly.
Timewise, it corresponds to Revelation 7, when Christ and His angels seal the 144,000 elect. Revelation 6 corresponds to the time when Daniel’s 70th week ends, or the Day of the Lord.
‘The frightening day of their anger has come, and who is able to endure it?’ Rev. 6:17The following verse says the storm clouds of that day will settle, and it will be quiet. Rev. 7:1–4 The prime reason for God to halt His judgements is to gather His elect, to teach and to instruct them. It takes time and lots of effort. Teaching them may last six months or even three years—we don’t know.
There will be at least 12,000 elect from each tribe and they need to be taught. They will spread the Gospel to every nation on earth and that nation’s attitude towards Christ will determine their judgement. Once they repent, they will be saved from the torment of the great tribulation. Let me explain:

- Christ will return on the Mount of Olives to later meet His elect at Petra.
- The earth will be quiet as God withdraws His judgements, until the 144,000 elect are sealed.
- Once the elect are trained, Christ will return to heaven, and the elect will disperse to each nation.
- Once the 144,000 elect do preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth, they will carry the measuring rod of God’s judgements.
- If any nation refuses to repent, God will judge them and from Revelation 8 onwards, He details all the judgements on the unbelieving people.
- If any nation repents, they will be exempt from God’s judgement.
- The last nation to repent is Babylon at Armageddon.
- Then Christ will return to reward His servants. His message to them is: ‘Be watchful when I return. ’
- The true believers in Christ will be segregated from the fake believers—the goats from the sheep.

Mark 14:1 - 11

Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days off; and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, that they might kill him. But they said, ‘Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.’ And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; and she broke the alabaster and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves and said, ‘Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have

been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor.' And they murmured against her. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. '

Simon of Bethany was a disciple of Jesus, a Pharisee who had been healed from his leprosy. In gratitude, he wanted to invite Jesus along with many of his other Jewish friends. Jesus and his disciples spent the last of his six days prior to the Passover at Bethany, and rested each night at the home of Lazarus.

Two days before the Passover, he was invited by Simon, while the Jews plotted to kill Jesus at Jerusalem. Amongst the guests were Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, Martha who spent her time serving them, and Mary who listened earnestly to Jesus speaking. She was distressed when she heard him speak of his impending death, and she longed to show him some honour. She purchased an alabaster box of 'ointment of spikenard, very precious,' with the idea of anointing his body. Breaking the box with the ointment, she poured its contents upon his head and it trickled down to Jesus's feet; then, as she knelt weeping, moistening them with her tears, she wiped his feet with her hair. The scent of the ointment filled the room and everyone was alerted. Judas could not hide his displeasure. Instead of waiting to hear what Christ would say about this deed, he began to whisper his complaints to those near him, criticising Jesus for suffering such waste. Judas was the treasurer and he thought the money was wasted—and he deemed it better to be given to the poor. Turning to the disciples, Judas asked, 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?' Mary heard their words of criticism. She felt embarrassed but Jesus encouraged her saying: 'Let her alone. Why do ye trouble her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burial. '

Mary bought the fragrance to be lavished upon the dead body of her Saviour, but she thought it better to pour its contents on the 'living' Jesus than at his burial. At the burial its sweetness would only permeate the tomb; now it gladdened Jesus's heart in the final week leading to his crucifixion, with the assurance of her faith and love. Mary's deed of love did prepare Jesus for his burial. When Jesus experienced the humiliation of his great trial, he carried with him the memory of her great deed. It is better to show our appreciation to our loved ones while they live; better to give them flowers when they can appreciate them, than throwing them on the grave, for none to smell.

Mary could not answer her accusers. She could not explain why she had chosen that occasion for anointing Jesus. As the alabaster box was broken, and filled the whole house with its fragrance, in a similar fashion Christ

had to die, and his body was to be broken as the alabaster box; but he would rise from the tomb, and the fragrance of his life would fill the earth. ‘Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.’ Eph. 5:2

Once our Lord was crucified, Mary had no need to anoint his dead body, as she had done it prior to his crucifixion.

‘Verily I say unto you,’ Christ declared, ‘Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.’ Looking ahead to the future, Jesus prophesied, saying his gospel would be preached throughout the world. And wherever this gospel is preached, many hearts will be stirred when they hear of Mary’s genuine act, the fragrance that filled the room, to please our Lord immensely.

When Jesus left his disciples, they felt like sheep having no shepherd; they began to realise how they might have shown him greater attentions that would have gladdened his heart. They no longer blamed Mary, but themselves. Oh, if they could have taken back their criticising, their presenting the poor as more worthy of the gift than was Christ! The expensive ointment would not be called a waste.

Matthew 24&25	Rev. 12	Rev. 11 2 witnesses	Rev. 16 Bowls	Rev. 8 & 9 11 v15-19 Trumpets	Rev. 7	Rev. 6 Seals	**Revelations** Chapter
	Satan flung to earth Son (Church) caught up to heaven						Rapture
Flee to the mountains (Petra)	Israel (mother) fleeing to Petra	At Jerusalem Killed after 3½ years Resurrected Went to heaven				1st seal (peace)	3½ years peace
The Abomination at the sanctuary	Woman had a prepared placed in the wilderness God will protect His remnant at Petra for 1260 days Satan angered, unable to reach them					2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th Seal War Famine Death Martyrs Day of the Lord	3½ years tribulation
Sun and moon darkened Gathering His elect					144 000 sealed with a mission in the desert		**Day of the Lord Sun and the moon darkened**
The fig tree budding The fig tree bearing fruit			1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th Bowls earth sea rivers heavenly sores Euphrates bodies on body river	7th seal includes the following trumpets 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th earth sea rivers heavenly abyss Euphrates bodies opened river	Great multitudes of people evangelized by the 144000		33 years
			7th Bowl Armageddon	7th trumpet Armageddon			Armageddon

Simon the host was prejudiced by the criticism of Judas upon Mary's gift, and he was surprised at the conduct of Jesus. Simon said in his heart: 'This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. '

To his unspoken thoughts Jesus answered: ‘Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee…. There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?’ Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most.’ And he said unto him, ‘Thou hast rightly judged.’ Lk. 7:41–43

The parable represented both Simon and Mary. Simon felt more righteous than Mary, and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence.

Simon now began to see himself in a new light. He saw how Mary was regarded by One who was more than a prophet. Jesus could sense her heart of love and devotion. Simon realised he was in the presence of One superior to himself. Our Lord continued: ‘I entered into thine house, and thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.’ Lk. 7:44–45 Christ recounted the opportunities Simon had to show his love for his Lord, and his appreciation of what had been done for him. Plainly, yet politely, Jesus assured his disciples that his heart is grieved when his children neglect to show their gratitude to him by words and deeds of love.

Turning to the woman, he said to Simon, ‘Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.’ Lk. 7:44–47 The Pharisees retorted: who can forgive sins but God alone? We too need to forgive and in the Lord’s Prayer it says ‘forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. ’

There is a condition here: this mercy can only fill our hearts if we are prepared to forgive those who have trespassed against us! The rule is if we forgive men’s trespasses, our heavenly Father will also forgive us. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matt. 6:14–15 Grace and forgiveness are not in the dictionary of the religious people adhering to the law. They merely reason—‘I cannot forgive and forget, so leave it to God; he only can forgive.’ Their hearts were cold and they shunned Mary.

Simon’s coldness toward the Saviour showed how little he appreciated the mercy he had received. He thought he honoured Jesus by inviting him to his house, but now he saw himself as he really was. He saw how true Christ’s judgment of him was. He had to distance himself from the cloak the religious leaders wore, that made him despise the compassion Jesus had for sinners. He did not recognise him as God. Mary was a pardoned sinner, and he was an unpardoned sinner. The rigid rule of justice he tried

to enforce on her condemned him. Simon was touched by the kindness of Jesus by not openly rebuking him before the guests. He saw that Jesus did not want to expose his guilt to others. His pride was humbled, he repented, and the proud Pharisee became a lowly, self-sacrificing disciple. Mary was looked upon as a great sinner, but Christ knew the circumstances that shaped her life. He might have extinguished every spark of hope left in her soul, but he didn't. It was he who had lifted her from despair and ruin. It was Mary who sat at his feet and learned of him. It was Mary who poured upon his head the precious anointing oil, and bathed his feet with her tears. Mary stood beside the cross, and followed him to the sepulchre. Mary was first at the tomb after his resurrection. It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour.

'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' Rom. 8:33–34This anointing raises many questions:

1. How many times did the 'woman' anoint Jesus?

It is a much debated question and, generally speaking, the theologians assume our Lord was anointed three times. It was early in his life (Luke 7), six days before the Passover (John 12), and finally two days before his crucifixion (Matt. 26 & Mark 14). They reason David, like Jesus, was also anointed three times: by Samuel (1 Sam. 16), by the men of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4), and by the elders of Israel (2 Sam. 5:3; 1 Chron. 11:3). It is recorded by each Gospel writer. I am convinced our Lord was only anointed 'once. 'John merely said that Jesus and his disciples arrived at Bethany six days before the Passover (Jn. 12:1) and his first night at Bethany was not an invite from Simon. John says four verses earlier (Jn. 11:54) that Jesus resided at Ephraim, seeking refuge amongst the 'Gentiles,' and decided to return to Jerusalem for the Passover. The six days before the Passover he spent at Bethany and his first meal there was not with Simon, but he did accept the invite from Simon in the final week before the Passover. I believe he was invited two days before the Passover (Mark 14:1). There is a harmony in the Gospels and the greatest mistake is to negate the individuality of each Gospel writer. The four Gospels were written to cover the life and ministry of Jesus. Each writer differed from the other, viewing things from a different perspective. The Gospels are not intended to be a biography of the life of Christ and they are not arranged in chronological order. Each author is selective in what he portrays. Jesus did many more things than the Gospels record, as John testified (John 20:30). It is impossible to detail everything.

Even though it is mentioned early in the book of Luke, it does not guarantee that we should think they were two events. People love to have a synoptic view of the Gospels, and if they differ, they think they contradict each other. It is like the placement of a story, like the healing of the centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10). Placing them side by side, they are quick to respond: 'Aha! They are contradictory.' If we reason they are written chronologically, then the Gospel of John is totally out of order as he commences the Gospel with the resurrected Christ, and not as a child born at Bethlehem. If you had a task to ask a classroom filled with

children to write an essay on something they all experienced, each will be written in a non-stereotyped manner.
Another reason why we are dealing with ‘one’ anointing is that Bethany is always mentioned. The critics reason if Bethany is mentioned three times, it is no guarantee, thinking they are the same event. Compare the healing of the blind in Mark 10:46 with that in Matthew 20:29. In Mark Jesus heals one blind man on his way to Jericho, and in the other he heals two blind men on his way out of Jericho. The theologians try to distort the Scriptures looking for any possible discord—in fact, they are the same event and I discussed it extensively in my notes (Mark 10:46).

THERE IS A MARKED HARMONY

Details	Matthew 26	Mark 14	Luke 7	John 12
Location	Bethany[6]	Bethany[3]	.	Bethany [1]
Dwelling	House of Simon the leper [6]	House of Simon the leper [3]	House of a Pharisee [36]	.
People mentioned	Simon the leper, a woman [6-7]	Simon the leper, a woman [3]	A Pharisee, a woman of the city who was a sinner [36-37]	Lazarus, Martha, Mary, Judas Iscariot [1-4]
Who anointed Jesus	A woman [7]	A woman [7]	A woman of the city who was a sinner [37]	Mary [3]
Martha				Martha served at the dinner
Condition of the woman	.	.	Weeping [38]	.
Location of the woman	.	.	Standing behind Him at his feet [38]	.
Activity of woman	poured ointment on Jesus' head [7]	broke the flask and poured ointment over Jesus' head [3]	Used her tears to wet feet - wiped them with her hair, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment [38]	.
Substance used to anoint or bathe?	300 denarii of expensive ointment in an alabaster flask [7, 9]	very costly ointment of pure nard in an alabaster flask [3, 5]	her tears (to bathe) and ointment in an alabaster flask (to anoint) [37-38]	a pound of costly ointment of pure nard [3]
Head / feet?	Head [7]	Head [3]	Feet [38, 44-46]	Feet [3]
Used to wipe the body?	.	.	her hair [38]	her hair [3]
Who were outraged?	The disciples [8]	Some [4]	Simon, the Pharisee who invited Jesus [39]	Judas Iscariot [4]
What did the outraged say?	Why this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor. [8-9]	Why the ointment was wasted? For this ointment might have been sold for more than 300 denarii, and given to the poor. [4-5]	If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner. [39]	Why was not this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor? [5]
Jesus' initial response, lauding her	Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. [10-11]	Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; [6-7]	Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment [44-46]	The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me [8]
The woman prepared Jesus' body for His burial.	In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial [12]	She has anointed my body beforehand for burying. [8]		Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. [7]
Jesus' final response	Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her. [13]	And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her [9]	Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. And he said to her, Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace [47-50]	Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial [7]

Is Mary Magdalene the Sister of Martha?

The Protestants argue they are different, as Mary Magdalene was too vile a sinner, having no other valid reason. The Catholics agree they are the same. The Protestants picture Mary of Bethany sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to his words. When her sister complained that she didn't get help in the kitchen, Jesus said, 'Only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.' (Lk. 10:42) Judas Iscariot complained because of her generosity, and Martha complained to Jesus because Mary didn't help her in the kitchen.

The Protestants think Mary Magdalene is a different kettle of fish. This Mary weathered some storms in her life. She had seven demons inside her, and what a relief when Jesus cured her! She was rich and one of the women who followed Jesus in his ministry and helped support him out of her own means. (Lk. 8:1–3) When Jesus' darkest hour came, there she was, standing at a distance from the cross, and she noticed where they placed the body of Jesus. Early Sunday morning, when it was still dark, she was at the grave, and what a surprise when she found the grave was empty! That Mary was the first to meet the resurrected Christ and the first to run with the good news that Jesus is alive!

The general view is that they are two different people, because no historical evidence seems to exist or support that they are the same person. An odd way of reasoning. Besides, there is the problem of the place of origin. Bethany is in Judea, while Magdala is in Galilee. We can speculate that perhaps early in her life Mary left her home in Bethany, went to live in Magdala, and after she met Jesus she returned to Bethany. This does not contradict any of the biblical evidence. We are dealing with the same person, as the Mary who anointed Jesus is recorded in Luke 7:37 as 'a woman who had lived a sinful life'. Yes, she is the Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus. Her name is revered in the south of France at Marseille. My notes on Mark 10:17–23: She accompanied the apostles to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. A daring woman, she went to preach in pagan Rome with the message: 'I have seen the Lord!' Tradition says in Italy Mary Magdalene visited the Emperor Tiberius (14–37 AD) and proclaimed to him the news of Christ's resurrection. According to tradition, she took him an egg as a symbol of the resurrection, a symbol of new life, with the words: 'Christ is risen!' Then she told Tiberius that, in his province of Judea, Jesus the Nazarene, a holy man, a maker of miracles, had been executed at the prompting of the Jewish leaders and the sentence declared by Pontius Pilate. Tiberius responded that no one could rise from the dead, any more than the egg she held could turn red. Miraculously, the egg immediately began to turn red as testimony to her words. Then, and by her urging, Tiberius had Pilate removed from Jerusalem to Gaul, where he later suffered a horrible sickness and an agonising death. For centuries, it has been the custom of many Christians to share dyed and painted eggs, particularly on Easter Sunday. The eggs are known as 'Paschal eggs'. The eggs represent new life, and Christ bursting forth from the tomb. Among Eastern Orthodox Christians, this sharing is accompanied by the proclamation 'Christ is risen!'

Mary and Martha together portray the 2 and the 10 tribes of Israel. We discussed their history extensively in the book of Mark 5:1–20, as Mary portrays the 10 lost tribes of Israel and Martha Judah, the Jewish people who did accept Christ.

The KJV says: after two days was (the feast of) the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. At best, ignore the words written in italics, as it confuses matters. We need to study the feasts of Israel.

On the day following the Passover, commenced ‘the feast of unleavened bread’, so called because for seven days only unleavened bread was allowed to be eaten. (Ex. 12:18–20) It should read: ‘And after two days it would be the Passover and the unleavened bread.’ The reason is the unleavened bread was not allowed throughout the Passover, or with the following feast of the Unleavened Bread lasting 7 days. The Passover was on the 14th of Nisan, and on the evening of the 13th of Nisan, all the leaven had to be removed from every household. On the 15th of Nisan was the feast of unleavened bread, following the Passover.

Why was Jesus anointed at Bethany and not Jerusalem? We spoke previously of the delay of Christ’s kingdom. He had no intention to commence his earthly kingdom at Jerusalem, and thus he resided at Bethany. All his guests who were present at Simon’s house do picture the truths of our dispensation.

History unfolds from the Mount of Olives or Bethany, in sight of Jerusalem. The stark message is Jerusalem and all its beauty will be destroyed, as Ezekiel 11:23 pictures this transformation.

‘And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.’ It is the Mount of Olives.

When the book of Ezekiel was written, he wrote mostly of the 10 lost tribes of Israel who were taken captive in the Assyrian captivity. Then the ten tribes of Israel were on the other side of the Euphrates, at least about 150 years after their captivity by the Assyrians. God had a clear message for Israel, and Ezekiel telling him: ‘Get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech (they spoke perfectly good Hebrew) and of an hard language, but to the House of Israel; not to many people of a strange (foreign) speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand.’ (Ez. 3:4–6) When the Jewish nations refused Christ, his glory went to the Mount of Olives or Bethany, and the people there were blessed. (Ez. 11:23) Bethany can be translated as ‘I am the house’, and presently the house is the Church or the body of Christ. Our Lord was rejected by Judah, but the tribe of Simeon did accept him, the reason why he chose Bethany.

The alabaster box that used to carry the perfumed oil was made of a white, marble-like substance. Ointment, oils and perfumes used to be put in vessels made of alabaster to seal them, but once Mary broke the alabaster box, the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. The ‘nard’ was an overpowering scent.

When Mary broke the seal allowing the perfume to escape, it is likened to the death of our Lord. The ointment or the perfume was poured on his head, and it dribbled down his body to the hem of his garments, equated to a well-known psalm.

‘Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.’ (Ps. 133:1–2)

It was poured on his head, reminiscent of the Spirit, as it is volatile. It is like the oil that trickled down Aaron’s beard, down to the hem of his clothing and feet, to envelop him totally. It suggests he was filled with God’s Spirit. Similarly, the kingdom of Christ will advance as the oil that dripped down Aaron.

Mary was the first to anoint Jesus, and her breaking of the alabaster box or flask is likened to Jesus’ death, and the aftermath is the fragrance or the resurrected Christ. She too was the first to meet the resurrected Christ. She was told to gather the disciples at Galilee, and there they would meet him.

The overpowering scent of the perfume filled the room, and everyone was aware of it, resembling the Spirit today. Christ’s kingdom will progress, and his Spirit will fill the earth. At present, in our dispensation, Christ’s kingdom is invisible but secured in the house of Simeon at Bethany. It fills the Church, as the lives of his disciples—Mary, Martha, Simon and Lazarus—do witness it.

However, the story does not end there. The perfume dribbled down his clothes until it reached the hem of his garment and his feet, and then his Spirit will physically fill the earth, commencing at Jerusalem. It will happen after the rapture of the Church. Then the Gospel will spread from the Mount of Olives (Bethany) to Jerusalem, to the uttermost parts of the earth. All the nations of the earth need to obey him, or else they will be obliterated. Jesus predicted his death, and even after he died, the aroma (Spirit) fills the Church, and in each of us who accepts him.

‘To God we are the aroma of the Messiah among those who are being saved and among those who are being lost.’ (2 Cor. 2:15) If any person has a very bad reputation, the people will say his name stinks.

Jesus’ feet were anointed throughout his life, as Isaiah says: ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good.’ (Isa. 52:7) On a final note, the apostle Paul says we too are sent to preach the Gospel. ‘And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’ (Rom. 10:15) Our feet too are anointed, the carriers of the glad tidings to all the earth.

Who is Simeon? He is one of Jacob’s sons, belonging to the lost tribes of Israel. His history is especially tied to Joseph. In Genesis 42, Joseph reigned with Pharaoh in Egypt, and then Joseph did not reveal himself to his brothers. His brothers knew he was Pharaoh’s second-in-command and never knew he was a blood relative. Joseph chose to wait, and he put his brothers in a predicament by accusing them of being spies and telling

them that they must bring back their youngest brother Benjamin, to prove they were not lying. To ensure they would return, Joseph takes one of the twelve brothers, Simeon, and puts him in prison, vowing not to release him until Benjamin returns. They go back to their father Jacob and tell him the news. The oldest brother Reuben swears to bring Benjamin back safely, but Jacob refuses and says,

‘Their father Jacob said to them, you have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!’ (Gen. 42:36)

However, hunger made them return to Egypt along with Benjamin. Simeon is in jail during this entire time! Joseph had the power to free his brother from prison, but he didn’t. I believe Simeon is blessed, guaranteed of having food and shelter. He pictures the Church today, as we too are ‘outside Israel’ and imprisoned. Strangely, the world is unaware of Joseph or his whereabouts, as today, when Christ’s real identity is unknown. Oblivious to the world, Joseph and Simeon are blessed immensely in the Church, absorbing the much-contested firstborn rights of Israel.

Simeon translated in Hebrew is ‘the hearing’ or a believer—he accepted the Word of God.

When his brothers returned the second time to Egypt, it says in Genesis 45:6‘For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be ploughing and reaping. ’

The 2 years are tied to the 2 years Paul spent in prison at Rome. It transmits our 2000 years of waiting. The second time the brothers returned to Egypt is equated to Christ’s second coming to earth, a glorious reuniting of Israel. To Jacob, the first mission of his sons seemed a failure, but it ended in the greatest surprise of his life.

Who is Simeon of the New Testament? This is said of him: ‘Simeon was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.’ (Lk. 2:25–26) Somehow, the Holy Spirit had spoken to Simeon and revealed to him that before he died, he would see the Lord Jesus Christ or ‘the Lord’s Christ’, meaning the Lord’s anointed one. That is obviously referring to Jesus Christ, as Christ means anointed. It also appears that Simeon was an old man, as it says after seeing the child he would depart this life. This explains why he said, after seeing the Lord as a babe, ‘now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word.’ (Lk. 2:29) Somehow the Spirit must have communicated to Simeon that Jesus is the only way to salvation, as he told Jesus’ parents (Mary and Joseph), ‘for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.’ (Lk. 2:31–32)

It is not limited to the Jewish nations. This is why ‘his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him.’ (Lk. 2:33) But then came a prophecy about Jesus and specifically to Mary:

‘And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, … and a sword will pierce through your own soul also. ”’ (Lk. 2:34–35) Jesus ‘is appointed for

the fall and rising of many in Israel, and a stumbling block for those who rejected him.' (1 Cor. 1:23) Simeon also said that with a sword her heart or soul would be pierced, which occurred at the cross. What Simeon wrote is still valid today; Jesus is the cause of many to rise and to fall. For those who believe in him and have repented and put their trust in him, they shall rise, but for those who reject him, will die.

Then we have Simon who carried the cross of Christ. Unknowingly, he identified himself with the humiliated Christ. 'As they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, and they compelled him to go with them, that he might carry his cross.' (Mt. 27:32)

Our Lord's message to us today is: 'take up your cross and follow me,' willing to die in order to follow Jesus. It is known as 'dying to self', to totally surrender to him. After each time Jesus commanded us to bear his cross, he said, 'For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?' (Lk. 9:24–25)

Simon the magician typifies where the occult is leading us. 'There was a man named Simon who had previously practised magic in the city and amazed the nation of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is that power of God which is called great." And they gave heed to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.' (Acts 8:9–11) No matter how innocent the practices of the occult seem at first, they are manipulated by the demons. The man must have resembled Obelisk, the great warrior who resisted the Romans. We mentioned earlier in the book of Mark 5:1–20 that the 10 lost tribes of Israel dabbled with occultism, but in the book of Acts, the possessed man did accept Christ, as many did belonging to the 10 tribes of Israel.

To better understand the history of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, we need to study Micah 5. The chapter commences with the town of Bethlehem Ephrathah (v. 2), where Jesus is born. Micah experienced the time when Israel was taken into the Assyrian captivity. He prophesied that the Assyrians would invade their land and trample down their palaces in Israel. The great surprise of this chapter is they in turn will attack Assyria with seven shepherds and eight leaders. (v. 5) I have no idea who the shepherds and princes are. Finally, the 10 lost tribes of Israel will rule Assyria and the country of Nimrod with all their swords. There will be a great revival amongst many of the people from Jacob, and they will be a real blessing to the world, like showers on the grass. (v. 7) They will spread the Gospel to the utmost parts of the world. Their enemies will be destroyed, but God has a special dealing with Israel. He says he will destroy your sorcerers, and you will have no more fortune-tellers. He will destroy their idols and sacred monuments, not worshipping what their hands used to make. Then God will take revenge on the nations that do not obey him. (vv. 8–15)

How truthful, as Micah 5 portrays Simon the sorcerer who repented, accepting Christ. Simon who invited Jesus had leprosy, a disease first mentioned in the Bible by Miriam or Mary in Greek.

In the New Testament, Lazarus does portray Eleazar the son of Aaron. In Greek, the name Lazarus (whom God helps) is another form of the Hebrew name Eleazar. Lazarus clearly portrays Christ, as he died and was resurrected from the dead. At Mount Sinai, God wrote the Ten Commandments, and in the same breath God did speak of Eleazar, the successor of Aaron.

‘Aaron’s son Eleazar succeeded him in the priestly role.’ (Deut. 10:3–6)

This is interesting, as Eleazar has to do with the new or the second tablets of stone. The original set of stones did break when Aaron moulded the golden calf. When a new set was written, it was placed in an ark. In the next breath, it says that Aaron died to be followed by Eleazar. The new will exchange the old, and it is the old covenant that will be exchanged by the new covenant. Aaron embodies the old covenant, and Eleazar the high priesthood of Christ or the new covenant.

Numbers 20:25 says both Aaron and his son Eleazar had to climb Mount Hor at Petra. On top of the mountain, they had to unclothe Aaron, and then Eleazar, his son, had to wear Aaron’s priestly clothes. Aaron died, and typologically Aaron’s death spelled the end of the old covenant, and Eleazar portrays Christ as the high priest of the new covenant or Melchizedek.

Mary of the Old Testament

The first time leprosy is mentioned in the Bible is in the history of Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses. (Num. 12) In Greek, Miriam is translated as Mary. There was a great family dispute between Miriam and Aaron, who argued with their brother Moses, who married an Ethiopian woman, annoying them immensely. To end the dispute, God called them to the tabernacle. He descended on a pillar of cloud, and he told them he speaks to Moses face to face, and not in riddles. Neither Miriam nor Aaron had such a close relationship with God. Moses embodies the law, and the law is firm and unyielding. I believe this argument goes much deeper, and possibly both Aaron and Miriam opted to be delivered from the law and its grip. Similarly, we can study the 10 lost tribes of Israel, as they too had a similar temperament, refusing to obey the laws of Moses. Since the time of King Solomon, the 10 tribes did not have a righteous king. We as the Church of Christ are faced with a similar dilemma, since we as the accused people do not adhere to the law, but we opted to be made free in Christ.

In the end, the Lord was infuriated with Miriam, and he judged her. The ‘seven days’ when Miriam had leprosy correspond to our dispensation of grace. The history of Israel halted, and they had to wait until the time she was ‘cured’. Aaron was not punished, as he pictures the work Christ is doing for us right now. The Hebrew word Aaron means ‘light bringer’, as Christ is the life-giving Word of God. In contrast, Miriam pictures the Church outside the camp. Miriam was covered with leprosy, and she was forced outside the camp. I hope you get the picture. Miriam outside the camp is comparable to us today. (Heb. 13:13)

We have many disputes in the Bible, and especially the time when the 10 tribes of Israel were burdened and angered by King Solomon. They opted wisely to be freed from slavery. Figuratively speaking, they accompanied

Miriam outside the camp—and they too are reckoned as leprous. Remember the history of the ten lepers? They are a great example of the ten tribes of Israel (the ten lepers in Samaria) who got healed. (Lk. 17:11–19) One of the ten that were healed did return to worship him: The healed leprous man is a type of the Church, the leprous nation who are the main bulk of the Church.
For 7 days, Miriam was punished outside the camp until she was healed from her leprosy. (Num. 12:15) The dispute that Miriam had is more than meets the eye. The dispute that erupted between Solomon and the 10 tribes of Israel is not settled today, but it will be after the rapture of the Church. Then God will concern himself again with the history of Judah and the remaining tribes at Paran, Selah or Petra. That is where the history of Miriam unfolded.

Mark 14:10–11
Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, came unto the princes of the priests to deliver him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.
The Gospel of John is considered the most anti-Semitic book in the New Testament. He turns Judas Iscariot into a man associated with evil and money, associating the Jews with money-lending. He asked why the money was not given to the poor—supposedly, not that Judas cared for the poor, but he was a thief and wanted the money for himself. (Jn. 12:3–6) Luke and John link Judas with the devil (Lk. 22:3 & Jn. 6:70; 13:2,27) and link the words: Pharisees, Jews and ‘your father the devil’ (Jn. 8:44), together with the synagogue and the devil (Rev. 2:9 & 3:9). The stark history of Judas is contrasted to Simeon and Mary Magdalene. In essence, Judas portrays the Jewish nations, and Mary Magdalene and Simon the 10 tribes of Israel. Simon in Greek can be translated as ‘the hearing’ or the listening tribe.
The apostle Peter did expand on the history of Judas in Acts 1, and he quoted the Old Testament. When we study the Psalms, then it’s easy to establish the subject of the verses are the Jewish nation as a whole. ‘Let their habitation be desolate’ (Ps. 69:25 & Acts 1:20) are the habitations of the affluent: of princes, nobles, high priests and doctors of the law. The word ‘habitation’ may be rendered as ‘their palace’ or ‘castle’, and even the members of their Sanhedrin. It was left desolate, as prophesied. (Mt. 23:38)
Psalm 69 is written in the plural and not singular to only target Judas. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and not a house is left standing, nor are there any inhabitants. It is levelled to the ground, ploughed up, and not one stone left upon another. (Lk. 19:44)
Thus, Psalm 69 is not about Judas, but the Jewish council who rejected Christ. Judas is only a taste of things to come, what the Jewish nations can expect if they refuse Christ.
Judas is like Judah who walked with our Lord, experienced the miracles he did first-hand, but it ended with his rejection.

He is like the modern-day theologians who dispute the claims of Christ, who harbour great sympathy for Judas. It is fashionable to muse on Judas, either as a victim of circumstance or as a hero, blessed by Jesus to set the stage for his condemnation. Some would suggest that Judas was but a helpless pawn, unable to resist the invasion of Satan into his life. The general opinion is ‘he is not as bad as we think’. He pictures the Jewish nations in unbelief, one of the 12 disciples who unfortunately is associated with Judah. Judas is translated in Hebrew as Judah. The name Iscariot means man of Kerioth, or even a man of the country. The word Pharisee is from the root meaning ‘separated’ or ‘detached from the country’.
Judas raises many questions, like:

- If Judas did not betray Jesus, what would have happened? I believe then someone else would have done it. However, Judas had no idea he was going to do the dirty deed until shortly before the Last Supper. It was Judas’s political expectations that were his downfall. He, like many Jews, expected him to re-establish a literal kingdom to eliminate the hated Roman Empire. The disciples were slow to understand that Jesus’ kingdom was not of this world. It seems Judas was trying to force Jesus’ hand—to get him to present himself as the Messiah in a political manner. Jesus was going to die on the cross no matter what Judas did. If he hadn’t betrayed Jesus, it would have happened differently, but it still would have happened. Remember, before his death, the Jews tried to kill him without the help of Judas, and the Bible says Jesus escaped because his time had not yet come. The leaders would have persecuted him at his appropriate time.
- Why did Christ die? Who was responsible for his death? Did you hear what the apostle Peter said? ‘You handed him over to be killed … and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.’ (Acts 2:23) They knew the wicked men who helped to crucify Jesus, and the chief amongst them was Judas. It was Judas who handed Jesus over to the Pharisees by betraying him with a kiss. (Mt. 26:16)
- Why did Judas do this? He was a close friend and companion, someone who shared bread with Jesus. In pursuit of material gain. Humans descend to the deepest immorality. For the love of money, judges pervert justice, politicians sell their power. The language of all such people is the language of Judas: ‘What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?’ (Mt. 26:15) Jesus said it is impossible to serve God and money. Judas chose money. It made him ‘to sell’ Jesus to the Pharisees.
- Why did they arrest Jesus on the feast, as the chief priests and the experts in the law conspired to kill Jesus not during the feast (Mk. 14:2), but via the help of Judas, he was persecuted on the great day, a feast day; so things didn’t go as planned. Surely Jesus was known, comparing him to celebrity status, as the people used to pave the way he walked, climbed trees to see him. He was famed, and why did the Pharisees need Judas? If Jesus and his disciples were hanging around Jerusalem all the time, why didn’t the Pharisees arrest him at

their leisure? Why did they need Judas to tell the soldiers which one Jesus is? I believe the epitome of Judas is to portray the real character of the unbelieving Jewish people.

- Judas, according to John 12:6, was a thief, and Jesus knew everything he was up to. (Jn. 6:70) So why did Jesus put him in charge of the money? He put a thief in charge of his moneybag. Doesn't it ever strike you as odd? Why was Judas carrying the moneybag in the first place? Jesus chose Judas to be the treasurer of his travelling expenses. Was it not poor judgement on Jesus's part? Was it not deliberate, as Jesus knew Judas was stealing the money? I believe our Lord tried to envisage the Jewish nations today as a people who dabble with all the money of the central banks. Don't blame our Lord, as he too was human, and he wore diapers as we did, and he too had to learn the alphabet as we did.

Judas Iscariot was inflamed at this 'waste' of the anointing oil, and he had the opportunity to either go home and vent his anger, but instead he chose to go to the chief priests who were meeting in Caiaphas' home, plotting to kill Jesus. Judas asked for their price, and they gave him 30 pieces of silver. They were at the house of Caiaphas, who prophesied: 'You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.' (Jn. 11:49–50)

Whatever happened to Judas, Jesus would have died. It was the will of God. Simply said, the Jewish people, as Judas did, did not want to confront the truth or the Bible. Since that time, the Jewish people have suffered many unpleasantnesses, as no other nation on earth. I am sure no other nation would have done any better. God chose Israel to prove the defects of our human nature, and they will be blessed immensely, as via them many truths are made known to us.

We and each nation need to accept the resurrected Christ, and our attitude towards him has grave consequences. God fulfilled many prophecies via the Jewish nations, and similarly Judas, who was a 'tool' to allow the death of our Lord. As Judas revolted against Jesus, similarly the Jewish nations today do loathe the resurrected Christ. There are many difficult questions to be answered concerning Judas, and the easiest way to explain them is to view him as a delegate of the Jewish nations, living in disbelief. They have all the cards on the table, and yet they rejected him. The death of Judas is a foretaste of the Roman invasion in 70 AD, forcing them into Egyptian captivity.

An Overview of the Gospels

Before we continue with the events leading to Christ's death and resurrection, we need an overview of the Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they include many of the same stories, in contrast to John, whose content is rather distinct. To me, the greatest difference is that John rarely mentions the Kingdom of God, and it has no Mark 13 or Matthew 24. John's Gospel omits a large amount of material found in the Synoptic Gospels, including some surprisingly important episodes: Jesus' birth, the temptation of Jesus, Jesus' transfiguration, and the institution of the Lord's Supper are

not mentioned by John. John mentions no examples of Jesus casting out demons. The Sermon on the Mount is not found in John. The only parable in John's Gospel (15:1–8) is the vine and the branches.
The Gospel of John details for us many other events not written in the Synoptic Gospels. They are the early visits of Jesus to Jerusalem before the Passion Week, the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn. 11), and the extended Farewell Discourse (Jn. 13–17). I hope the following table will clarify the major differences between John and the Synoptic Gospels.

Gospel	**Life (Strong's no. 2222)**	**Kingdom (Strong's no. 932)**
Matthew	7	54
Mark	4	18
Luke	5	44
John	35	3
Paul's Letters	36	13

The Synoptic Gospels had many Christians thinking that Christ's return is imminent, but on the contrary, the Gospel of John teaches us differently. He knew there would be a long time of waiting. The emphasis on 'eternal life' in John's Gospel is closer to the Letters of Paul than to the Synoptic Gospels.
What we know is since Christ's death and resurrection, he did hide himself, and he works in the quiet.
It would have been lovely if he appeared to the Sanhedrin in the temple after his resurrection, proving them wrong. No, he chose to be hidden, to appear to many believers like Mary Magdalene, the two people on the way to Emmaus, his disciples, then to the 500 men at Galilee, etc. No, he hid himself, and he calls us to do likewise.
He is hidden, but he will manifest himself to the world on the Day of the Lord. The world deems him as dead, a general view of many theologians. They don't need to prove this, as the Scriptures are clear about it. I don't blame the people today if they reason God is dead, thinking he is asleep to the problems of our world. What can the world expect if they rejected him on the cross, and rightfully he turned his face away from them? (Isa. 53:3) Since his death, our Lord disregards our world and even the old man. They are given over to all sorts of filth. So God lets them go ahead and do whatever shameful things their hearts desire. (Rom. 1:24) The world is unaware that there is a relationship between him and the Church, and they are totally oblivious of our inheritance in heaven. God is alive within us, and the phrase 'the living God' is found 15 times in the New Testament. On the quiet, he is accomplishing his work: firstly in the Church, and after the rapture of the Church, he will concern himself with Israel and then the remaining nations of the world.
In the meantime, he allows the sinners to become viler, to continue with their filthy works. (Rev. 22:11–13) Our world is soiled, and it staggers backwards. God turned a blind eye, and he is not troubled by our world's daily mishaps. It's our doing.

Today the world supposes that the crucified Christ is in the grave of the rich—the grave belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. The mere mentioning of the name Joseph does reflect the 10 lost tribes of Israel, or Simon in this history. Things did not go as planned. Moses prophesied 3500 years ago that God will hide his face from them: ‘and he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.’ (Deut. 32:20)
Mark 14 is different to Mark 13, when our Lord’s eminent return is addressed. Mark 14 speaks of our current dispensation and not the ‘end time’ when Christ appears. The mere mentioning of the Mount of Olives, Simon, Mary Magdalene and Bethany, and the ‘unknown man’, do make us think twice.
If we turn a blind eye to the greater spiritual truths of Christ’s anointing, then what will it teach us? Simply nothing, if we merely follow the concrete and ethical issues, like do we need to anoint our fellow brothers? This passage teaches us many things, and the real message is that Judas or the Jewish nations will be ‘set aside’, and it will be given to another people: to Mary Magdalene and Simon, who portray the other tribes of Israel. The new covenant will commence with the ‘other house’, the sheep from the other fold. (Jn. 10:16) Judas did not fulfil his task, and he is acknowledged as unbelieving Judah.

Mark 14:12 – 16
And the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover, his disciples said unto him, “Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the Passover?” And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, “Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, ‘The Master saith, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?’ And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there will I eat the passover with my disciples.” And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
The first day of Unleavened Bread, or the Passover, must not be confused with the “Feast” of Unleavened Bread. It was the 14th of Nisan, and they had to prepare the Passover. The disciples asked Him where they needed to go for the Passover, as our Lord did adhere to some aspects of the Mosaic Law but not the Talmud. The disciples went reluctantly, and they warned Jesus on several occasions not to go to Jerusalem, as His life was in danger. Unwillingly, they escorted our Lord to the Passover; they had no other option than to follow their Master.
Our Lord sent Peter and John to prepare for the Passover, and the “pair” portray the Church, as Martha and Mary Magdalene are tied together to resemble the Church. Peter and Martha portray the believers amongst the Jewish people, and Mary Magdalene and John portray the believers from the remaining tribes of Israel.

Both Judas and Peter rejected Jesus before He was crucified, but the difference is that Judas did not accept the resurrected Christ, as the unbelieving Jewish nations did not, whereas the Apostle Peter did repent.
John and Peter had to look for a man carrying a water pitcher, and then they had to follow him into a room. The details given to direct them to the upper room sound somewhat mysterious: “Behold, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; go into the city, and a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you.” Jesus must have told them by which gate they needed to enter the city, and there the man with the water pot would be on the lookout for them. There was a sort of arrangement, flavoured with some sort of conspiracy.
The message to the householder was: “The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples.” What did Jesus mean by “My time is at hand”, and equally important, who is this nameless friend?
The “nameless person” carrying the pitcher of water is known in astrology today as Aquarius, the 11th sign on the Zodiac map. He is known as the water-man or the water bearer. It signifies a time of refreshing and the outpouring of the Spirit. The water bearer has a large vase of water, the water he pours from the sky. This would be an apt portrayal of the pouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, which is likened to streams of living water (John 7:37–39). One of Aquarius's decans is Pisces Australis—the southern fish, the fish drinking the heavenly waters. As we all know, the early Church chose the sign of the fish to symbolise their faith.
Isaiah prophesied: “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants” (Isaiah 44:3). However, the water denotes the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.
Carrying the water symbolises taking the Gospel to the Gentile nations; the pouring of the water symbolises the interaction of the Gospel; drinking the water symbolises our faith in the Gospel.
Somehow, a great part of me believes the water bearer is a close family member of Jesus, namely His uncle or Joseph of Arimathea. The response of most Christians is to ignore the complete importance of Joseph of Arimathea, maintaining that not much is written about him. Joseph of Arimathea is introduced in Scripture at a vital time when Christ was crucified. He had the means and power to claim, embalm, and bury Jesus's lifeless body. He was very wealthy, and possibly it was his upper room, to accommodate 120 guests at one moment (Acts 1:15). He prepared the complete arrangement and the occasion, as the room was prepared.
There are many legends of Joseph of Arimathea, more than are found in the Gospels. A whole host of other stories have grown up around him. They maintain:

- He was the first person to bring Christianity to Britain.
- He built Britain's first church.
- He was Mary's uncle, and thus Jesus's great-uncle.
- He was a merchant who visited England to buy Cornish tin.

- He took Jesus with him to England when Jesus was a teenager. His mother Mary was a widow, and he had the means to entertain Him.
- He brought to England two vials containing the blood and sweat of Jesus.
- He brought the Holy Grail to England and hid it in a well at Glastonbury, now called the Chalice Well.

More than the body of Jesus was entrusted to him, as the Holy Grail was his. He arranged the upper room, the Holy Grail, the cups that are still used at Passover today.

We too are invited to a prepared meal, as our Lord said on the last day of the Feast: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37). It is an open invitation, and we are all invited.

Mark says that Joseph went boldly to Pilate to request the body of Jesus (Mark 15:43) and just in time. If there had been no special request made by Joseph to Pilate for the body of Jesus, His body would have been buried that night in the common grave with the malefactors. It was a law of the Jews that the body of an executed man should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (John 19:31). God called forward His secret disciple, and he too belonged to the royal family of David.

When we study the Bible and we envisage Joseph and the pitcher or the Grail, then our thoughts are directed to Joseph and his silver cup. When the sons of Jacob visited Joseph the second time in Egypt, they would have returned home in high spirits, discovering the money had been returned to them. Wait, as there was a great setback. Now, why did they discover Joseph's cup in Benjamin's bag? Was it another setback? The mug was placed at the mouth of the bag. The mouth is important, as from our mouth we speak God's Word. The Apostle Paul was from Benjamin, and he disclosed many truths pertaining to our dispensation. Somehow, there always seems to be a “hold-up” in the critical time of Israel's history, always to aptly portray the truths of our dispensation.

If we had to translate the words “such and such”—as the man who carried the pitcher of water—into the Hebrew language, then it would be translated as ploni almoni. I will mention some examples.

- The enchanting history of Ruth does illustrate the truths surrounding the words “ploni almoni”. Naomi and Elimelech, her husband, had to migrate to Moab, experiencing a time of great famine. They had two sons who married two Moabite women. One of them married Ruth. For unknown reasons, the three men died, tragically leaving behind three widows. The drought in Israel improved, and Naomi wished to return. Naomi told her two daughters-in-law to return to their own mothers and remarry, but against all odds, Ruth chose to remain with Naomi and to escort her to start afresh. She refused to abandon her bereaved mother-in-law, having no family to help her. Ruth had great faith, and she said: “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.” Ruth's genuine love for Naomi and her people brought great blessings, and together they returned to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Ruth went to the fields to glean

barley and wheat picked after harvesters had collected the bounty. The field belonged to Boaz, and he was kind to her because he had heard of her loyalty to Naomi, her mother-in-law. Ruth told Naomi of Boaz's kindness as she gleaned in his field of barley and wheat during the harvest. Boaz happened to be a close relative of Naomi's husband's family. Impressed by Ruth's actions, Boaz obliged the Levirate Law to marry Ruth and carry on with their family inheritance. Boaz acknowledged the privilege he had to marry her but realised there was another closer relative who had first precedence. Boaz discussed the issue with “ploni almoni”, the unnamed person in the Book of Ruth.

The other kinsman is the “wild card”, and nothing is known about him. He is the puzzle in this Book. Boaz knew the other kinsman could derail his attempts to marry Ruth. The words “such a one” are a translation of the Hebrew words “ploni almoni”. He is anonymous.

“Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down” (Ruth 4:1).

We are familiar with Boaz, but the nameless person was the brother of Elimelech (Ruth 4:3). Generally speaking, the three brothers were Boaz, “ploni almoni”, and Elimelech, who died in Moab. Why did they refuse to name the unknown brother? The reason why he is not named is because, typologically, he denotes the “hidden Christ” in heaven. Ploni means to separate, as it stems from the Hebrew word palah; since His resurrection, He remains hidden, and presently the Jewish nations—or the world who deny Him today—will not see Him.

The mystery of ploni almoni or the hidden Christ continues until today. He is hidden and unnoticed in heaven, but once He returns to earth, He will be known, and His kingdom will envelop our entire world. The Jewish people thought their Messiah would reign immediately on earth, oblivious of the hidden aspect of our dispensation.

Boaz portrays Christ's future kingdom on earth, or the Millennium, but ploni almoni portrays our dispensation, when Christ's Spirit is poured on the believers of the Church. Our Lord spoke to them in parables, and only the true believers could grasp the suffering He had to endure, His resurrection, and His ascension to heaven. Ploni almoni will manifest Himself to claim His throne on earth, and then every eye will see Him. That throne was promised to King David (2 Samuel 7:13).

Initially, at the start of our dispensation, He is hidden and unnoticed in heaven, but once He returns to earth, His kingdom will envelop our entire world. At first, the Jewish nation thought Christ would immediately reign on earth, and they were oblivious of our dispensation—or the hidden aspect of our dispensation. Boaz portrays Christ's visible future kingdom on earth, but his unknown brother portrays our dispensation, rendering the spiritual matters. Our Lord spoke to them in parables, and only the true believers could understand the suffering He had to endure, His resurrection, and eventually His ascension to heaven, where He is hidden until today. Later, He will manifest Himself to claim His throne on earth,

and then every eye will see Him. That throne was promised to King David (2 Samuel 7:13). How true, as the grandson of Boaz and Ruth was Jesse, the father of King David, as recorded in Matthew 1:5–6.

- Daniel 8:13 speaks of another “unknown saint”, and Young's Literal Translation names Him as the “wonderful numberer”, who knew where to place the 2300 days in God's calendar: “I heard a certain holy one speaking, and a certain holy one said unto the wonderful numberer which was speaking.” In Hebrew, it is translated as palmoni, binding the two words ploni almoni.

The subject was the 2300 days, and they entail the latter half of Israel's great Tribulation (1260 days) and the horrid time of Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the holy place. I believe Antiochus desecrated the temple for 940 days (2300 - 1260 = 940 days). When we study the last few verses of Daniel 8, we will find it difficult to differentiate whether we are dealing with the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, or the end times—or probably both. During those times, God will abandon Israel, but on the Day of the Lord, He will reveal Himself.

- 1 Samuel 21 and 2 Kings 6 do speak of an unknown hideaway—naming it ploni almoni. David was hungry and felt deserted when he decided to go to Nob, and he wanted to speak to Ahimelech the priest, who gave him food to eat. Ahimelech went out to meet David, and they were alone. He was frightened when he met David and asked him, “Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?” So David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king hath commanded me on some business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place” (1 Samuel 21:1–2). Ahimelech translated in Hebrew is “my brother is king”; thus, together the two portray Melchizedek. While David was forced to hide, Saul was crowned as king, and he portrays the Law. That is the reason why the Apostle Paul's name was changed from Saul to Paul once he accepted Christ. He did not want to be associated with the Law.

I believe that the heritage of “such and such” a place does portray the richness of the Church in heaven today. The truth of our dispensation is hidden, and Saul (the Law), accompanied by his 3000 soldiers, proved powerless to penetrate the fortresses of David. David fled from Saul, and he did not want to disclose his stronghold to the priest Ahimelech, so he says, “I have directed my men to ploni almoni.” It says David escaped to the cave of Adullam, and soon his brothers and all his other relatives joined him there. Then other men began coming—people who were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented. David was the captain of about 400 men (1 Samuel 22:1–2). We too are demeaned by the world, and our refuge is to be with Christ outside the camp. We know where the hiding place is.

In the New Testament, we have more examples.

- When Paul stood trial, the people shouted, “Away with such a fellow! He is not fit to live!”

Claudius Lysias intervened when the Jews sought to kill Paul at Jerusalem (Acts 21:31; 24:22). He rescued him and wanted to know who he was and why the uproar. Lysias tied him with two chains and asked who he was. Paul's speech did not appease him, and he wanted to scourge him. Once he discovered Paul was a Roman citizen, he abstained and released him from his bonds. He then forwarded Paul under the protection of a bodyguard to Felix at Caesarea, along with a letter.
In Greek, Claudius can be translated as “lame”, and Lysias as “the redeemer”. He is the lame redeemer standing on his one leg. Indeed, when the Apostle Paul went to Jerusalem, his life pictures how the redemption of God will go from the two to the ten tribes of Israel. The lame leg of Claudius pictures how the redemption went from the Jews (weak leg) to the heathen nations. The good leg represents the ten tribes of Israel.
The Apostle Paul did speak to the Jewish people in their own Hebrew language, and he recounts the story of his conversion. He ends by saying God sent him far away to the Gentiles. The Jews saw Paul's Gentile mission as a threat to their survival, effectively erasing the line between Jews and the Gentile people within the Church. The crowd listened until the Apostle Paul tackled their sovereignty. Then they all began to shout, “Away with such a fellow! He is not fit to live. ”
In Acts 13:47, the Apostle Paul quoted Isaiah 49:6, saying he is the light for the Gentiles, to enable God’s salvation to reach the ends of the earth. They are the exact same words spoken of our Lord in Luke 2:32. The Apostle Paul embodies the risen Christ or ploni almoni. The Scripture is meant for Christ, but quietly it is fulfilled by His followers.

The Upper Room
The evening before the Apostle Paul had to leave Troas, he spoke all night to a large crowd in the upper room. Amongst them was a young man who sat at the window, as the place must have been crowded or too suffocating. He fell asleep while the apostle was speaking. Whenever in the Bible we read of someone sleeping—like Daniel in chapter 10, who was in a deep sleep—it needs to alert us to our present dispensation. He was on the third floor, sleeping soundly in the upper room, to portray our position in the heavens. The crowds were alarmed when they heard the loud thump when he plummeted to the street or yard and was declared dead. The Apostle Paul ran down to meet the lifeless body, and he lay on him; and he was dead. The upper room portrays the heavens or the third heaven, where we are seated with Christ. The Apostle Paul placed himself down on him, touching each other’s hands and feet. He did awake from the dead.
We have two similar stories in the Old Testament.
Elijah the prophet raised the widow of Zarephath’s son from the dead (1 Kings 17:17–24). Elijah was boarding in an upper room of the widow’s house during a severe drought, and while he was there, the widow’s son became ill and died. In her grief, the woman brought the body of her son to Elijah, and he took the lifeless body from her arms. Together they went to the upper room, prayed, and then Elijah stretched himself out on the

boy three times as he prayed. The Lord heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him.
The prophet Elisha raised the Shunammite woman’s son from the dead (2 Kings 4:18–37). He regularly boarded with the family, having a special upper room prepared for him whenever he visited them. One day, while Elisha was at Mount Carmel, the couple’s young son died. Quietly, the woman carried the body of her son to Elisha’s room and laid it on the bed. Then, without even telling her husband the news, she departed for Carmel to find Elisha. As soon as Elisha arrived, he went to the upper room, shut the door, and prayed. Then he stretched himself out on top of the lifeless body, and the boy became warm.
There is a great resemblance between the three events, and each of them concerns our dispensation.
On both occasions in the Old Testament, the prophet was with a woman, and they both had a son.
The sons were brought to the upper room. It is to portray the Church's position in heaven.
Elijah and Elisha associated themselves with the sons.
On both occasions, they said: “Woman, see thy son”; “Son, go to thy mother. ”
The son is associated with Ephraim and not Judah, as the firstborn amongst Israel is Ephraim. That is how the Book of Genesis ended, and he will be part of God’s greatest salvation plan.
The sons died when they were taken captive during the Assyrian captivity in 720 BC. Miraculously, they are healed, and it happened when they were taken to the upper room to be placed in heaven.
The woman and the son portray the ten lost tribes of Israel, as they lived outside the borders of Israel. There were many needy widows in Israel during Elijah’s time, when the heavens were closed for 3½ years and a severe famine devastated the land. Elijah was not sent to any of them in Israel but, on the contrary, he was sent to a foreigner, a widow of Zarephath. There were many lepers in Israel, but only one was healed, namely Naaman, a Syrian (Luke 4:25–27, correcting the reference to align with context). Elisha had a small upper room: a bed, a table, a chair, and a lampstand (2 Kings 4:10). What more do we need in life? The table is our communion with God, the bed and the chair our place of rest, and the candle is the Spirit to lead us daily.

Mark 14:17–21
And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.” And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, “Is it I?” and another said, “Is it I?” And he answered and said unto them, “It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born. ”
During Jesus’s time, several men were named Judas, but only one of them betrayed Jesus. Most of the people who were named Judas had a second

name. Sometimes, Jesus’s own brother Judah (which means “Praise” and who wrote the Book of Jude) was called Judas: “Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?” (Matthew 13:55). “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?” (Mark 6:3). The apostle Thaddaeus was sometimes called Judas, the son of James (Luke 6:16) : “Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (John 14:22). “And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room. . . These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. . . that is Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James” (Acts 1:13). The traitor Judas is known as the son of Simon Iscariot.

Judas Iscariot is named as one of the 12 disciples in Matthew 10:2–4; Luke 6:13–16 says he was a traitor. Judas and the other eleven apostles had more opportunity to accept Jesus and the message of salvation than any other person on earth. They learned a tremendous amount about the Messiah, but Judas never truly accepted Jesus or the message of salvation. Judas's real annoyance surfaced when Mary anointed Jesus with pure, fragrant oil in preparation for His burial. ‘Mary took a pound of very precious ointment of pure nard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, one of Jesus’ disciples who would betray Him, said, “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” He said this, not because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and, having the money purse, used to steal what was put into it. Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She has kept this for the day of My burial. ”’ John 12:3–7
It is easiest to study Judas when we compare the Gospels.
We notice that Judas was more than ‘possessed’ by an evil spirit; he was literally taken over by the devil himself. Previously, Judas must have noticed Jesus escaping arrest and death, and he assumed He would likely escape this arrest, but this time Jesus did not escape. Judas's heart was filled with remorse.
The truths of our dispensation are pictured by the upper room, Mary Magdalene and Simon, but not Judas, as he has no part of it. He must have felt like a stranger, sensing the unease. He was eager to leave the upper room. We will soon discover that Judas does portray the history of Judah, directed by Satan himself. That evening, Jesus did not address the twelve as His disciples, knowing that one of them had the devil. Judas was dangerous, knowing His whereabouts.
In the evening of the Passover, it says Judas left the upper room and it was dark. He was directed by Satan, and then it was literally night for Judah, and the unfolding events proved it. There are seven nights in the Book of John, and in the same Book it says He performed seven signs and seven times He said: ‘I am the great I am.’ The dark world of unbelief is contrasted to the ‘much light’ in the upper room at Troas. The first time

Judas is mentioned by John, he says Jesus chose the twelve disciples, but one is a devil, speaking of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

After saying this, Jesus travelled throughout Galilee. He did not want to be in Judea, because the Jews there were trying to kill Him. John 6:70–7:1. In the same breath, Judas, Judea and Galilee are named, to contrast the attitude of the two houses of Israel. Jesus' attitude toward Judas changed immediately.

He was through with him; he had crossed the line and hardened his heart, as Pharaoh did in the past. Jesus could not reach out to him. The difference was immediate, comparing day and night. Notice both Satan and Jesus were speaking to him. Satan said, ‘Betray Him.’ Christ said, ‘Do it quickly.’ Judas was determined to betray Christ, Satan was resolute to try and destroy Him, and Christ was determined to die for the sins of the world. But Jesus did shatter Satan's plan by rising from the grave.

None of the disciples caught the significance of what was happening. They thought Judas had left to go shopping or do some charity work during the Passover season.

The Bible does not say where Judas went, but evidently he went to finalise his deal with the Sanhedrin. Any person who rejects Christ will be overwhelmed by eternal darkness.

Judas knew Jesus took His disciples to Gethsemane. It was Jesus' ‘custom’ (Luke 22:39), and John says Judas knew the place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples (John 18:2). In the early morning, while Jesus was speaking to His disciples, Judas arrived, followed by a large number of men having swords, lanterns and clubs, and willingly Jesus submitted Himself to them.

When David was king, he too had to flee Jerusalem during an attempted coup by his own son Absalom. King David fled to the Mount of Olives, following the same path our Lord followed to Gethsemane. David and his loyal followers fled the city via an eastern route: ‘He continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and they wept as they went up’ (2 Samuel 15:30). Our Lord wept and felt humiliated when He followed His usual route over the Kidron Valley to remain at Gethsemane. All the disciples deserted Him and fled. During David’s time, Absalom epitomised the law (Judah), as he seemed to be flawless, but King David was too compassionate, picturing Christ’s saving grace. It is grace opposing the law.

Judas in the Old Testamentχ Zechariah 11

It is a disturbing chapter and nothing heartening is said, to unfold the events with Christ’s first and second return to earth. Early in the chapter, Zechariah was commanded to watch a flock of sheep doomed to slaughter (v. 4). He obeyed, using two shepherds’ staffs, and he named the staffs Favour and Union (v. 7). Within a month, Zechariah fired the three shepherds working under him (v. 8). Then Zechariah abandoned the flock and broke his staff named Favour. Indeed, with Christ’s return He will remove His favour from His people, to be hassled by their enemies (v. 6). Zechariah asks his employers to pay him his wages, whatever his worth

was. They gave him thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave, as an insult to Zechariah. The prophet sarcastically calls it a ‘handsome price.’ Matthew 26:15 records Judas’ words, saying: ‘What are you willing to give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?’ Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver!

God told Zechariah to return the coins to the potter in the house (or temple) of the Lord (v. 12–13), and it corresponds to Matthew 27. After Judas betrayed Jesus, he was filled with remorse and he returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests (Matthew 27:3), and when the elders refused to accept the money, Judas threw the coins into the temple, left and hanged himself (Matthew 27:4–5). Here’s the significance. Christ went to the cross as the ‘servant’ of God (doulos—a slave; Philippians 2:7). The rejection of Christ was a reflection of the Jews’ attitude toward Jesus, who deemed Him worth thirty pieces of silver: ‘Cast it to the potter, the goodly price that I was prized at by them’ (Zechariah 11:13). Matthew says that Judas returned the coins to the chief priests and elders. But they would have none of it. The scribes did not want to put the ‘blood money’ into the treasury, thus the priests used it to buy a potter’s field. The thirty pieces of silver is not incidental, as under the Mosaic Law it was the price to remedy the injuries caused by a neighbour’s ox who gored a servant (Exodus 21:32). Their superficial creed would not allow the temple treasury to be contaminated with blood money. The term ‘sanctuary’ denotes the Most Holy Place, in contrast to the outer courts of the temple area. The chief priests took the money and purchased a ‘potter’s field,’ which would serve as a burial place for strangers. During the time of Matthew 27:8, the place was known as ‘the field of blood’ (Acts 1:18–19).

Jeremiah 18 also mentions a potter’s house, where he noticed a potter making a vessel of clay, but it got spoiled. He remoulded it into another vessel; he did what seemed good to Him. The one lump got spoiled, and they are the unbelieving Jewish nations. From the same clay (Israelites), He moulded another vessel (the ten lost tribes of Israel or the other house) to shape a vessel that pleased Him. The Apostle Paul says, ‘Hasn’t the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel for His honour (Simeon) and another for His dishonour (Judas) ?’ The deciding factor today is our faith in the resurrected Christ, to be a vessel of honour or shame.

I mentioned the three shepherds (v. 8) and the staff of the shepherd, named Favour and Unity. The staff called Favour is the love and grace, the love God had for His sheep, leading them to the greener pastures. He had their interest at heart. The stick ‘Unity’ speaks of the unity we enjoy in Christ today, and we can easily grasp this in the New Testament.

‘I got rid of three shepherds in one month. I became impatient with the sheep, and they also became disgusted with me’ (11:8). It happened once they rejected the source of all life. In verse 10, the stick ‘Favour’ is broken, and in verse 14 the second stick or ‘Unity’ is broken, and it is the unity between Judah and Israel. The union was severed during the time of Zechariah and it did not mend as yet. Remember, Zechariah spoke to the Jewish people after the remaining ten tribes of Israel vanished in the Assyrian captivity. A new covenant is mentioned in the Old Testament, and

the great aspect of the covenant is the unity that will exist even between the two and the ten tribes of Israel. It is easily traced in Ezekiel 34, where our Lord is portrayed as the one Shepherd who will feed the flock. He will seek them far and wide, and He will be their king. Under the old covenant, the conflict between the two and the ten tribes of Israel will continue. Once the true Messiah appears on the Day of the Lord, they will become one. The good Shepherd is the High Priest of the new covenant, and the shepherds of the old covenant proved to be incompetent, leading the sheep astray. Since Christ was resurrected from the dead, the two sticks (Favour and Unity) did not unite until today.

Since the time when the Jewish nation rejected our Lord, there is no unity on earth; they are broken and splintered. Today we live in a cold world with no kindness and unity, void of any miracles, nothing like during the time when our Lord lived on earth. The thirty pieces of silver spelled the end of their special relationship with God. They have no shepherd, are nomadic and they are targeted by the many deceitful shepherds and wolves.

'I got rid of three shepherds in one month. I became impatient with the sheep, and they also became disgusted with me.' The one Shepherd will replace the three shepherds, and we may ask who they are? Much is written about the shepherds and I believe it has a spiritual hint. Jeremiah 2:7–8 may give us a clue, saying: 'I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled My land and made My inheritance detestable. The priests did not ask, "Where is the Lord?" The people who deal with the law did not know Me; the leaders rebelled against Me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols. '

In the above verses, we find the words: priest, people who deal with the law, shepherds and prophets. They all have an occupation except the shepherd, expressing spiritual matters. In short, the shepherds are the priest, the people who deal with the law and the prophets. They were 'cut off' with the death and resurrection of our Lord. Christ is the end of the law, and today the priests are redundant, as God speaks to us via the 'Son.' It happened, and the Jewish religion is fake. With Christ's death and resurrection, the old covenant is obsolete. To me, the three shepherds are the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians. They are not ordained by God and redundant.

'So I said, "I won't be your shepherd. Let those that are dying die. Let those that are missing stay missing. And let those that are left devour each other"' (11:9). With Jesus' death, the old covenant ended, and the Good Shepherd is the resurrected Christ. All the aspirations the Jewish nations had as part of the old covenant got splintered to bits as the sticks broke, and the good Shepherd did nothing to avoid it. The resurrected Christ distanced Himself from the unbelieving Jewish people, as shortly afterwards Jerusalem was devastated. Flavius Josephus said the people starved and they became cannibals; it was horrid. He left them to their own plight.

'Then I took My staff called Favour and broke it in pieces, to break the promise that I had made to all the nations' (11:10). The staff 'Favour' is

the covenant, and it is the promises God made to gather Israel as a nation to commence the Millennium. It will happen as part of the promises belonging to the new covenant, tying in with the promises God made to Abraham and not Moses. The splintered stick is like the fig tree not bearing fruit, but it will as part of the new covenant (Matthew 24).
The thirty pieces of silver that were returned by Judas Iscariot were later donated to buy a piece of land, to allow the strangers or the heathen people to bury their dead in Jerusalem outside the gate. It pictures the Church today as we ‘rest’ in the untouchable Zion or Jerusalem outside the city gates (Hebrews 13:13)
Holy Grail to England and hid it in a well at Glastonbury, now called the Chalice
Holy Grail to England and hid it in a well at Glastonbury, now called the Chalice
• Judas' betrayal was also prophesied in the Psalms: ‘Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me’ (Psalm 41:9).
The phrase ‘lifted up his heel’ portrays brutal violence, driving the heel into the neck of the victim. It pictures the hurt Judas caused our Lord. Judas had first-hand experiences, hearing our Lord’s secret thoughts, and he read His very heart. The kiss of the traitor wounded our Lord’s heart as much as the nails wounded His hands. In the treasurer He trusted, who communed with Him daily, sold His Master for a slave’s price. He left Him with a heavy kick, such as a vicious horse. His betrayal was like the bitterest drops of gall. Saul (later named the Apostle Paul) also kicked with his heel. When Saul persecuted the Christians, Christ spoke to him from heaven, and he heard a voice speaking from heaven to him in the Hebrew language: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks’ (Acts 26:14). The reason is, at that time, Saul represented the unbelieving Jewish people or Judas who raised his heel against our Lord.
Psalm 41 is written in plural, saying His enemies (v. 5) speak evil against Him, wishing Him to die, to make His name perish. All the people who hate Him whisper softly, planning His death, thinking He will never resurrect again. They are the rulers, the government or the Sanhedrin who ruled the people.
This brings us to a great truth. Many Christians today believe that all the prophecies are done and dusted with, but it is not that easy. We cannot place them in the dustbin like Psalm 41, thinking Judas fulfilled the Psalms. It is more complex, as the above prophecies have two or more fulfilments. The truths of our dispensation are hidden in the Old Testament, and superficially it addressed Christ’s first coming to earth, but unbeknown to many, the same prophecies hide something far greater.
Was it really necessary for Judas to accomplish his task? I am sure if he didn’t, then our Lord would have been doomed to die the same death. Judas simply fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. Didn’t you ever wonder why our Lord often said: ‘That a prophecy might be fulfilled’? Twelve times Matthew cites the Old Testament prophecy in conjunction

with the term ‘fulfilled,’ together with such phrases as ‘that it might be fulfilled’ or ‘was fulfilled,’ ‘is fulfilled,’ ‘should be fulfilled. ’
The reason is the prophecies have a twofold fulfilment or even more, and Psalm 41 is one of them. Judas made a forced fulfilment of this Psalm, thus giving the Jewish people or the teachers of the law no Biblical reason not to accept Christ. Judas was a forced fulfilment of Scripture.
During the time of Christ, there were many other forced fulfilments, and they are the speaking of tongues on the day of Pentecost, the coming of Elijah that is partially fulfilled by John the Baptist, and when the Lord Jesus descended down the Mount of Olives on a colt.
When our Lord lived on earth, the Jewish people had no reason to reject Him, as all the prophecies were fulfilled in Him, even though many of them were done forcefully.
Imagine if any Bible student had to approach the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, telling Peter Christ cannot return immediately—say, shortly after the day of Pentecost—arguing that many prophecies are not fulfilled. When Peter addressed the Jewish council, he urged them to accept Christ, and they had no reason not to accept Him. If they did accept Him, then the Jewish nations would have continued living in the land of Israel, avoiding the great humiliation to be deported into the Egyptian exile. They would have entered the promises of the Millennium.
• Psalm 69:21 ‘They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink. ’
They are the words our Lord Jesus spoke when He hung on the cross, when they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall or myrrh. The Old Testament translates it as ‘wormwood’ (Proverbs 5:4; Deuteronomy 29:18). It is nauseating and narcotic, given by the torturers to dull the pain of execution, mixed with myrrh to make it drinkable. It may have been hemlock, or even poppy juice. It is a vengeance Psalm directed to Judas or the Jewish people who crucified Him.
‘Their table became a snare; and when they are in peace, let it become a trap’ (69:22). Any table raises things like flowers, food, etc. , and it conveys oneness, as with a meal. The cement of the Jews is Judaism, their religious practices. Their religious practices made their table a snare, and Isaiah 28:8 says their tables are filled with filthy vomit, having no clean spot. There is no room for the resurrected Christ, as their table is filthy, and they stumbled over the table as if it was a stone of stumbling (Isaiah 8:14). The irony is, if the Jewish nations did accept Christ, then it would have spelled the end of their religious practices. It will make them redundant, and they will not rule the people as before.
‘Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. Pour out Thine indignation upon them, and let the fierceness of Thine anger overtake them’ (69:23–24).
It pictures Israel’s blindness today. ‘To continually shake’ is they are always threatened. The Apostle Paul quotes this passage in Romans 11:9–10 to depict the Jewish nation today.
‘Let their habitation be desolate; let none dwell in their tents’ (v. 25). The Apostle Peter quoted this Psalm (Acts 1:20), speaking of Judas, but it also addresses the other inhabitants: ‘their palace’ or ‘castle,’ as they are the

kingly nation, having David as their King. Complete Israel will be devastated, as prophesied (Matthew 23:38). A comparison of Psalm 69:25 with Acts 1:16, 20 reveals that an Old Testament text has a primary application, but also a latter fulfilment. The primary fulfilment is Judas, and the latter fulfilment is when the Jewish nations disappeared into the Egyptian captivity. They will be stripped from their palaces to live in tents as nomads.

This Psalm ends on a positive note: 'For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah, and people shall dwell there and possess it.' On the Day of the Lord, the nation will repent, and the remnant will be blessed immensely. Their filthy tables will be cleared to accommodate God's blessings.

Understand, Judas's part is his own making. Even though God ordained it that Judas would be one of the twelve to deceive Christ, it was not apart from the desire of Judas. Judas was no robot. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He endeavoured to drive Judas to repentance, but his final plan was to betray Christ. If God was responsible for making Judas what he was, Jesus would have pitied him rather than rebuked Him. χ Psalm 109 'And let another take his office' (Psalm 109:8; Acts 1:20). Judas's office as an apostle was honourable, and it was taken away from him and given to another. The lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the apostles (Acts 1:21). This is true also of the Herodians, Scribes and Pharisees, who were stripped of their offices in a very little time; three shepherds were cut off in one month (Zechariah 11:8). New ordinances were appointed and created by Christ, and I believe the suspense of this chapter is not how the lot fell to favour Matthias. No, the real issue is the two houses of Israel: since Judah rejected Christ, the other house or the ten lost tribes of Israel will surface to sustain the duty entrusted to Israel.

David's petition in this Psalm may seem harsh to many, and remember it is not directed to Judas who died, but to the unbelieving Jewish people who rejected Him. We know 'all Scripture is profitable' (2 Timothy 3:16), and therefore the prayers in the Psalm have a lesson for each of us. David, like the prophet Jeremiah (18:20–21), cried out to God, petitioning Him to do what He had promised.

This Psalm is known as 'a cursing Psalm,' calling on God to judge and punish His enemies who made hateful accusations against Him. In return for His love, they accused Him. They were entrusted with the Word of God, and they had no excuse as the other Gentile nations who had no understanding of Him. The prayer of Psalm 109 is that the honourable office be taken away from him. It involves more than Judas. The wicked man (v. 6) is Satan, and he fosters all religions. Any religion that steers us away from the resurrected Christ is masterminded by Satan, and it includes Judaism. They masterminded the crucifixion of Jesus. This Psalm is focused on the dog-handler or Satan, and not the biting dog. In the opening verses (v. 1–5), the enemies are written in plural, but from verses 6 to 19, the Psalm refers to a singular individual. It is Judas who represents the unbelieving tribe Judah.

'May his days be few' (109:8). Judas died on the day of his betrayal, and soon afterwards the Jewish nations were stripped from their office, when

they disappeared into the Egyptian captivity. Once they do repent on the Day of the Lord, their office will be returned to them, to literally rule the world from Jerusalem.
Since Judah rejected the resurrected Christ, we can ask to whom the Word of God is entrusted and who is the kingly nation?
The office will always be given to Israel, and the Gentile nations are not in the equation.
If it is not entrusted to the one house of Israel, it will be entrusted to the other house of Israel.
At this pivotal moment, the mere mentioning of the name Joseph in Acts 1 needs to alert us to the history of Israel or the firstborn right that is entrusted to Ephraim.
It is not Judah (Judas) but the 'other' house of Israel or Ephraim. It is not from the two but from the ten remaining tribes of Israel.
Throughout the Bible, Joseph's name is mentioned frequently, and whenever it does, he is soon forgotten. Joseph disappeared to Egypt, and even Joseph, the husband of Mary, died at an early age. We read of Joseph of Arimathea, a champion of men, but after the embalmment of Jesus, he is never mentioned again. Why did they mention another Joseph in Acts 1, if the post is given to Matthias?
Joseph was also known as Barsabbas, meaning the son of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, and the 'son of the Sabbath' is the first day of the week or Sunday. Judas, who betrayed the Lord, pictures the Sabbath day in contrast to the 'son of the Sabbath' who depicts Christ, who resurrected on the first day of the week.
In the New Testament, there are two men who are named Barsabbas: It is Joseph Barsabbas, who rivalled Matthias as a candidate to replace Judas Iscariot, and the other Barsabbas is Judas Barsabbas, who, together with Silas, joined Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 15:22). Some maintain they were brothers or even the same person, giving him the authority to be a participant in the first general assembly or the Christian council of the early Christians held in Jerusalem.
The Church is not the ten tribes of Israel, but the bulk of the Church are formed from them. Western Europe and the United States were blessed, but if they forsake Christ as today, things will change. The Apostle Paul warns us when he discusses the olive tree (Romans 11:18–24) : 'For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not you.' The Apostle Paul speaks of the branches that will be 'cut off' from the olive tree. To understand this complexity, we need to understand who the Jewish nations or Judah are, the ten tribes of Israel and the Church. Today, the bulk of the Church is associated with the ten tribes of Israel, but they are not the ten tribes of Israel. If we don't understand the concept of the two houses of Israel, we will never understand the metaphor of the olive tree. Are we the branches in danger of being 'cut off'? Many argue that the olive tree is definitive proof a person can lose his salvation. We need to study the context of the olive tree, and at first glance it appears as if a reborn Christian can lose their eternal salvation. How could the Apostle Paul write of branches being 'cut off' (11:22) and then in the same breath

turn around and say that the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable (11:29) ? Take a closer look at Romans 11.
It speaks of the one house of Israel (Judah), who was hardened in part, and some of its branches were ‘cut off’ because of their common unbelief (v. 20). Paul then cautions the other house (the ten remaining tribes of Israel) to ‘continue in His kindness, otherwise they too will be “cut off”’ (v. 22). It is an issue between the two houses of Israel, and simpler it cannot get. We are not part of the world or the olive tree, similar to Christ who was not part of it (John 17:16). Since Western Europe and America deny Christ to favour the New World Order, many of the grafted branches are ‘cut off’ today. There is little faith amongst the tribes of Israel, thus a few remaining branches.
After the rapture of the Church, the Jewish people who respond to the message of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 are the first branches to bud on the olive tree. After the Day of the Lord, the ten tribes of Israel will be grafted into the olive tree—but not at the expense of Judah. Judah will be truly saved, and they cannot lose our salvation. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of our redemption (2 Corinthians 1:21–22; 5:4–6; Ephesians 1:13–14). The fake Christians who ‘fall away’ and are ‘cut off’ were never known by Christ or born again (Matthew 7:21–23).
There are many Judases in every age. Perhaps they are more common than ever today. The professing Church is full of people who are selling Jesus Christ, ‘crucifying to themselves the Son of God and putting Him to open shame’ (Hebrews 6:6). There are many who have eaten at His table and then lifted their heel against Him. Be sure you make the most of your opportunities.

Mark 14:22–25
And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and, blessing it, broke it and gave it to them and said, ‘Take, eat: this is My body.’ And taking the cup, having given thanks, He gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, ‘This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.’ ‘Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. ’
His ‘Spiritual Body’
‘This is My body’ has been the subject of endless debates. The Roman Catholic Church teaches us that the bread changes into the body of Christ, and the wine becomes the blood of Christ, known as transubstantiation. They insist that the bread is His body, rendering the verb ‘is’ extremely literally. That is why they take such care not to drop or spill the elements in the Mass. Today, most Protestants believe the bread is His body, and the wine is a picture of His blood flowing on the cross. They seem to crucify Him again, thinking it is the crux of Christianity. The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus offered Himself once for all, having entered heaven with His blood and finished the work. The writer to the Book of Hebrews seems to state that the re-sacrifice of Christ is not a good thing (Hebrews 6:6).
The problem arises from the early Church leaders who looked at this ‘after the flesh’ and not ‘after the Spirit.’ Many Churches claim they ‘do the right

thing’ when it comes to the Lord’s Supper, and they are mostly in the dark regarding this ritual.
Christ established the Lord’s Supper to reiterate to us what He is doing for us right now, to us who share His body. The key to understanding this is to know that the ‘bread’ and the ‘wine’ are metaphors. Metaphors compare one thing to the other, and Jesus holding the bread is a metaphor. When Christ takes the bread and says, ‘Take, eat; this is My body’ (Matthew 26:26), He is saying that the bread they are about to share is His body, including the Church—not His physical body to die on the cross. He’s talking about His spiritual body—us today, His Church! All its members are part of this spiritual body, ‘the fullness of Him that fills all in all’ (Ephesians 1:23). The bread comes from the ‘one lump or dough,’ and similarly we too, who are many, are tied together having one spiritual body. ‘For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of the one bread’ (1 Corinthians 10:17). Confusion reigns if we, as carnally minded, think the bread and the wine do portray the old elements. It is mere symbolism, a memorial ‘after the Spirit. ’
The Old Covenant hinged on the people’s faithfulness to keep the Law. Of course, we realise they failed miserably, just as we too would have done. The Law served its purpose to reveal the depths of our human sinfulness. What we needed is not a new law to save us, but grace! Such is the new covenant, which is enabled by the blood of Jesus Christ:
And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many’ (v. 24).
The same bread and wine of the Passover celebration changed its meaning. It is to symbolise our union with His resurrected body as part of the new covenant and not the old, where sin and death reign. The Lord’s Supper is established in the midst of the Passover, a memorial of God’s physical deliverance of His children from their bondage in Egypt, through the blood (life) of the lamb. The truths of the upper room do picture our spiritual deliverance from sin and death that choked us.
When we admire the sheer beauty of a butterfly floating in the skies—we never ever think of the cocoon from which the butterfly came. Similarly today, when we see Christ, our thoughts are not stuck at Jesus’ crucifixion. No, the old is gone, and we see Him in splendour, having a Name exceeding any other name.
‘Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come’ (2 Corinthians 5:16–17).
Jesus promises to drink the cup in the Father’s kingdom. The word ‘drink’ in the text is continuous, saying He is going to keep on drinking this with you in His Father’s kingdom until that day, or the Day of the Lord.
The Old Testament prophets looked forward to the day when God would bring about the new. He will make a new covenant with His people (Jeremiah 31:31). It would produce a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true’ (Revelation 21:5). The Corinthian believers and the Lord’s Supper

‘And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me”’ (1 Corinthians 11:24–25). Notice I did not say: ‘My body which is broken for you.’ In most modern Bible versions that are based on the Westcott-Hort, Nestle-Aland, UBS/Vatican Greek critical texts, the words ‘broken’ are omitted. The translators who defend these modern versions tell us that the words ‘broken’ are not in the best manuscripts (meaning primarily Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), so it is wrongly placed in the King James Bible.
There were many disputes at the Corinthian Church, and we learn there was a serious case of immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1), some were taking their brothers to court (6:1). In addition, Paul received questions concerning marriage (7:1), virgins (7:25), foods sacrificed to idols (8:1), spiritual gifts (12:1) and more.
Simply said, they continued living as part of the old, obviously unaware that they are already part of a total new creation in Christ who is their Head. We are called to be sons of God, the temple of the living Christ, who is our High Priest and King. They should have known we are going to judge the angels (1 Corinthians 6:3), and they are the firstborn of a total new creation. Instead, they used their freedom to please themselves. The Apostle Paul addressed such an audience, and it took him many chapters to explain a few simple truths. 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 is drawn out to try and explain the importance of the Lord’s Supper. He commences with the similitudes of the early history of Israel, after they were delivered from their bondage in Egypt. He says: ‘For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness’ (10:1–5). All of Israel were totally part of Moses, and similarly today we too are totally part of the resurrected Christ, if we do accept Him. All the Israelites who accompanied Moses were baptised with him in the sea, when they entered the deep waters of the Red Sea; they died spiritually to be freed from their slavery in Egypt. When they ascended from the Red Sea, they were resurrected to a new life.
We too were baptised in Christ’s death and resurrection and are reckoned to be totally part of Him. When He died, we died, and when He resurrected, we were resurrected with Him. We have all been baptised into the one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).
The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night guided the Israelites during their exodus from Egyptian bondage. It allowed them to travel by day and by night (Exodus 13:21–22). God gave them the pillar of cloud by day to lead them in the way He wanted them to go, and the pillar of fire by night to give light. The pillar was not just symbolism but a real phenomenon. We have no way of knowing how God made the pillar, but it

was obviously a miraculous event that God used to lead them in the wilderness for forty years. During the day, the pillar guided their journey to signify God's Holy Spirit leading us. During the night, it lightened the power of darkness. The 'cloud' is the resurrected Christ in a non-recognisable form. Hebrews 12:1 says we have a great cloud of witnesses, and they are the believers in Hebrews chapter 11, like Abraham. Until today, they speak to us via the cloud or the Spirit, even though they died. It is 'spiritual' as the dead believers speak to us even when they are dead. The 'manna' is spiritual food they had for forty years in the desert, to symbolise Christ as the living bread.

At Rephidim, the people thirsted for water, murmuring against Moses, saying, 'Why did you take us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?' The Israelites should have learned to trust God to supply their needs, based upon His previous provision of water at Marah (Exodus 15:22–26) and quail and manna in the wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16). Furthermore, the Israelites did far more than just grumble, as they had previously done. Before this, the Israelites had grumbled against Moses and Aaron (15:24; 16:2, 7–8), but now they are about to stone him (17:4). Before, the Israelites asked Moses what they were to drink (15:24), but now they are demanding that Moses give them water to drink. They demand him to perform another miracle, proving he has God's authority to lead them. They were also challenging God, and Moses accused the people of 'putting God to the test' (17:2). God told Moses at Horeb to use the same rod he used to smite the Red Sea with, to smite the rock, and from the rock water will pour out to quench their thirst (Exodus 17:3–6). Jehovah is metaphorically called the 'Rock' over twenty times in the Old Testament.

Notice that Paul knew that the 'Rock' from which they drank 'was Christ.' Since Jesus is also the 'Word,' this miracle foreshadowed not only Jesus Christ (the Rock) springing up living water into everlasting life. Notice that the 'rock' had to be 'struck' before it brought the 'saving' water. The rock followed them wherever they went.

Many claim the stone Moses struck to bring forth water is the coronation stone of Westminster Abbey, England—residing since 1996 at Edinburgh? This stone was named Bethel (house of God) by Jacob roughly 4000 years ago, and it remained with Joseph's descendants. Tradition says the coronation stone upon which Jacob rested his head at Bethel (Genesis 28:18) was carried by Jacob's sons to Egypt. It travelled with them for forty years in the wilderness, supplying the miraculous water, and was preserved and taken to Ireland by Jeremiah. (See my notes on Mark 8:27–30.)

Several times the stone is mentioned in Scriptures:

• The Stone of Israel (Jacob) ; the Shepherd is passed on to Joseph (Genesis 49:24)

• Joshua sets up the Stone at Shechem for a witness (Joshua 24:24–27)

• Rehoboam goes to Shechem, the capital of the ten tribes of Israel, to be crowned as king of Judah (1 Kings 12:1, 25)

• Joash is crowned by a pillar, 'as the manner was' (2 Kings 11:13–14)

• Josiah's covenant by a pillar (2 Kings 23:3)

• Abimelech is Gideon’s son; he is crowned by the pillar at Shechem (Judges 9:1, 6)
• Israel is to be without a standing pillar (Hosea 3:4)
• All of Israel experienced a miraculous deliverance from Egypt and drank the water flowing from the ‘stone’ or Christ, but nevertheless God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. From all the people of Israel, only Caleb and Joshua entered the land of Canaan, due to their unbelief.

Hebrews 3:17–18 says that the sins of the nation angered God for forty years, making them die in the wilderness. God swore they will never enter His rest due to their disobedience. So we see that they were not able to enter, proved stubborn because of their unbelief. They all ‘believed’ when they left Egypt, and ultimately the complete nation of Israel did enter the Land of Canaan, but only two of the men that originally left Egypt entered the Land of Canaan. The reason is their unbelief. Almost all of Israel were redeemed from the slavery of Egypt, but they had no reward. Similarly, many Corinthian believers who are carnally minded did accept Christ, and they will be in heaven having no reward. Caleb and Joshua did enter the land of Canaan and were rewarded handsomely. Caleb pictures the believers from the two tribes of Israel, and Joshua from the ten tribes of Israel.

The history of Israel is a warning to us today, not to stumble due to our unbelief. We must not grumble as some of them did. They left examples to warn us today. They had to flee from the idols and be reasonable.

The Apostle Paul reasoned with them and asked the Corinthians to resolve the issue of the Lord’s Supper. When they bless the cup at the Lord’s Table, aren’t they sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren’t we sharing in the body of Christ? And though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one body. We cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, or eat at the Lord’s Table and at the table of demons. We don’t dare to rouse the Lord’s jealousy (10:16–22). That, besides the next chapter, is the only mention of the Lord’s Supper other than the Gospels.

We can enter God’s rest, having total faith in Christ’s sacrifice, to be totally obedient to God and His will. 1 Corinthians 10 continues to say that the complete history of Israel is a warning to us, not to crave evil as they did, not worshipping idols or indulging in pagan worship, sexual immorality, grumbling, putting Christ to the test. All these things happened to Israel to be a perfect example to us and ultimately warn us. The Apostle Paul’s final words to us is to flee from the worship of idols and be reasonable people. Decide for yourselves if he is speaking the truth. He then asks the question:

When we bless the cup at the Lord’s Table, aren’t we sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren’t we sharing in the body of Christ? Even though we are many, we all eat from the same loaf of bread, showing that we are one body. Think about the people of Israel, who were united by eating the sacrifices at the altar. The Apostle Paul spoke to carnally minded Christians who didn’t know they all belonged to the ‘One’

body of Christ. To them he unfolded the truths of the Lord's Supper to portray our unity.

A family dinner is not that's important; but it's the time we spend together. The Apostle Paul relates to the experiences the disciples had in the upper room, feasting together—simple and plain truths unfold. Food (bread and wine) depicts life, and His life today in heaven cleanses us. The table is communion, and it binds us like eating from the same vessel. If we don't commune with the others—then soon we will be reckoned as dead.

The baptism is to picture our death and resurrection in Christ, and the accent is His resurrection and not His death. 'Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised' (Romans 8:34). We left our old 'body' in the water, and the old is reckoned as dead. Similarly, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we don't reflect the past, thinking of the blood of Christ's crucifixion. No, the blood is flowing in our veins today. It is not a solemn occasion but something to raise one's glass to, to make us happy.

The bread at the Lord's Supper remains 'one' even if they had to break and share it. 'Even though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one' (10:17). Breaking the bread is not the breaking 'His' body, or drinking the blood that flowed with His crucifixion. The following verse speaks about the altar:

'Think about the people of Israel. Weren't they united by eating the sacrifices at the altar?' The altar is the table where they communed with the priest to eat the sacrifices.

Our baptism is a one-time occasion, but the Lord's Supper can be done weekly, daily—as often as we wish. If we thank the Lord for our daily food, the same symbolism is at play. During the time of the Apostles, some pagan people used to thank their idols, offering their meal to the idols to later eat it themselves. We can do alike, raising a toast to the resurrected Christ and not to the idols.

In the next chapter, 12:23–26, the Apostle Paul said he received the instruction of the Lord's Supper via the traditions, and Christ revealed to him, saying, 'When Jesus took the bread, He gave thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. "'

'Do this "in remembrance of Me"' is not to visit the graveyard. No, it is in remembrance of someone who lives, to someone we cannot see. It stirs our emotions to remember what our Lord did and what He is doing for us today. The bread and wine are not His physical body with His crucifixion. It is His living body, and we are part of it, totally dependent on Him alone.

'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.' (v. 26) Since the death of our Lord, the new creation commenced, and the old is gone. Everything became new. (2 Cor. 5:17) The Corinthians had great difficulty grasping the new life, noticing that the bread and the wine reflect the 'new'. It was difficult for them as they were carnally minded, lingering with the old. Whenever we partake of the emblems, then we notice the transformation from the old to the new.

We are redeemed from the old, as the Testator died, and we are totally part of the new. When someone leaves a will, it is necessary to prove that the person who made it is dead. (Heb. 9:16) ‘Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.’ (12:27)
If we share the emblems of the Lord’s Table thinking they merely portray His physical death, then at best, do not partake of it. The idea of a table is to impart life and not death – a toast to someone who lives today.
‘Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.’ (12:28, 29)
If we cannot discern the new, only to embrace the old, then we lose the real meaning of the Lord’s Supper. If we partake of it and continue living our lives as if we didn’t belong to Christ, as pagan people do, then the Lord’s Table has no meaning to us. If they do partake of the elements, it will benefit them nothing. Their reckless lives will be judged – it is not eating the bread or drinking the wine – no, their lives will judge them. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. (11:29) We belong to the body of Christ seven days a week, and need to live accordingly.
If we judge ourselves truly, we will not be judged, but if we don’t, then we run the risk of being judged by our Lord, to be disciplined. (11:31) We are urged to examine our standing in the body of Christ. If we don’t – be assured Christ will judge us. If we resist the free flow of Christ’s work inside His body, then all sorts of calamities (like diseases) can come our way, and the Bible is not specific. The Apostle Paul is speaking to the Christians and not the general public who refuse Christ.

Blood
Blood and life are used interchangeably in the Scriptures, but tragically most Christians think of death when they hear the word. If we do a Google search, then the words ‘life and blood’ are mentioned far more frequently than the words ‘death and blood’. Thus, when the Psalmist exclaims, ‘What profit is there in my blood,’ (30:9) he uses it for life. Blood at the scene of a terrible accident is a sign of death, but when blood flows through our arteries and veins, it proves life. If we have a pale, pasty colour, death may stare us in the face and, more than likely, we need a blood transfusion.
Our culture seems to be drawn towards violence, death and blood, and on TV, the average child witnesses many acts of violence. It is easy to misinterpret the Bible, thinking the blood of Jesus is a symbol of His death, rather than as an emblem of His life and truth.
• Blood symbolises life
When the Bible says that someone has blood upon them (Matt. 27:25, Deut. 19:10) or speaks of a city being ‘built with blood’ (Mic. 3:10, Hab. 2:12), it means the people are guilty of murder. In cases like these, blood is a symbol of death. In the other instances, blood denotes life. The following verses explain it.

‘But flesh with its life, which is its blood, you shall not eat.’ (Gen. 9:4) ‘You shall not eat the blood of any kind of flesh: for the life of all flesh is its blood.’ (Lev. 17:14) ‘Only be sure that you do not eat the blood: for the blood is the life; and you may not eat the life with the flesh.’ (Deut. 12:23) Thus, in all the sacrifices and offerings, the blood is a symbol of life. Your blood feeds every cell in your body. It also cleanses waste and transports poisons away. In the same way, Jesus Christ’s blood cleanses away the waste and poisons of the sins that damage your health. Because of His death, we can receive His life. Simply said, the blood is not a symbol of death or punishment, but a symbol of life. The blood of Christ flows in our veins, and He cleanses us while you are reading this.

Then Jesus said to them, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.’ (Jn. 6:53–54)

Clearly, Jesus was speaking symbolically, and we have to receive His life, to be part of His flesh and blood. If our Lord meant His ‘blood’ to be a symbol of His death, He might have said, ‘This is the blood of My death.’ But what He actually said was, ‘This is My blood of the New Covenant,’ (14:24; Matt. 26:28) and ‘this cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.’ (Luke 22:20)

‘But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.’ (1 Jn. 1:7)

• The blood of the Old Testament offerings

The blood of the Old Testament sacrifices symbolised life, and the actual physical blood did not bring about any atonement. The spilling of blood itself is not something that pleases God.

‘To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?’ says the Lord. ‘I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of the goats. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.’ (Isa. 1:11, 15) ‘For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.’ (Heb. 10:4) God does not want literal blood; instead, He wants the people to know what the blood represents, to look ahead to Christ’s completed work. Most Christians today think the Lord’s Supper focuses on Jesus’s death. When the Bible speaks of the blood of Jesus, they assume it is the blood with His crucifixion. This makes them think that Jesus saved them by His death, not His life, and that His death was a punishment from God for our sins.

Jesus died to overcome the power of hell. The Bible says that God took on flesh and blood so that ‘through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.’ (Heb. 2:14–15) He saves us by His life, more than by His death. (Rom. 5:10) Jesus did say that those who eat His flesh and drink His blood of the New Testament will receive life. It’s the only time Jesus mentioned His blood, and His purpose in saying this was to transfer our focus from the bloody sacrifices, as the focal point is His resurrected life.

The Bread and the Gospel of John

John wrote more about the events in the upper room than any other disciple, detailing for us more about events in the upper room than all of the other three Gospels, devoting five of his chapters to a single night. Earlier in John 6, Jesus makes a sevenfold declaration that He Himself is the bread of God that must be eaten in faith to obtain eternal life. (6:50, 51, 53, 54, 56, 57 & 58) In four of these verses, the Lord adds the figure of drinking to eating.

What happens when we physically eat and drink anything? In the physical sense, our body digests the food and drink we take, to be totally part of us. In a spiritual sense, when we 'eat and drink' Christ's flesh and blood, we are living on the doctrine of Christ. Jesus Christ indwells us.

The 'true bread from heaven' was not the manna which fell for the Israelites in the wilderness. They all died. But, 'My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.' (6:32) The spiritual 'bread of God is He which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.' (6:33) The spiritual bread is the spiritual life that never ends. It feeds the new inner spiritual man, each person who has accepted Christ as Saviour. Jesus said: 'I am the bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on Me shall never thirst.' (6:35)

The key word here is 'believes'. It is believing on Him – that is how we partake of His Spirit. You accept the things you believe in. You are what you believe, you are what you eat. Believing and accepting Him and His word, knowing who He is, what He has done, and what He will do – that is what it's all about. Belief is not a material thing; it is invisible and spiritual. To believe Him and what His name means is to eat of the spiritual bread from heaven. He encourages us to eat the 'bread of God'. 'Eat' is to spiritually believe what developed with His death and resurrection – a glorified body. Jesus is actually saying His flesh, His physical body, is going to be presented as the one sacrifice that would purge our sins. Believing this is eating (taking in) this great spiritual truth.

'I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world.' (6:51) Here we see Him giving His physical body, for us to be immortal. He is teaching us to pray not for material things such as food and goods. No. We are to ask for His Spirit, more faith, more belief of what He has done for us. He made our old nature die with Him on the cross, to be buried with Him, and to be 'raised to walk in newness of life' with Him. (Rom. 6:3–7) The words, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' is a solemn lesson – not the wheat we harvest, but the bread coming from heaven.

• The prepared 'meal' after Christ's resurrection

When they arrived at the shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish frying on it, and some bread. (21:9)

Strangely, the Lord's Supper is not mentioned in John's Gospel, but it is narrated in the other Gospels, namely Matthew, Mark and Luke, having bread and wine. After our Lord's resurrection, John had his version of the Lord's Supper when the resurrected Christ gave His disciples the bread

and fish. The same happened earlier in John 6, multiplying the five loaves and the two fishes.
‘Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine.’ (Jn. 21:12) We too are invited to a meal, specially prepared by our Lord and, strictly speaking, He is that meal. He, in fact, is the bread, fish and the wine. In short, He is our life. Both the bread and the fish do convey life. When the Lord Jesus gave the five loaves and two fishes to the five thousand men, besides women and children (Jn. 6), they sat on a high place, making us think of the upper room. We can enter the throne of grace with great confidence. To enter the sanctuary is a new and living way to the throne. (Heb. 4:16) We are the invited guests.
Beware: the antichrist uses baptism and the Lord’s Supper to supplant the Word. Many make the bread and wine, and even the baptism, as ‘necessary’ to prove our salvation. One of Satan’s greatest weapons is to take something good and twist the true meaning to the point that it becomes an idol! The true ‘eating and drinking’ of the Lord’s body and of His blood is to dwell on the doctrine of Christ and to make His Word that which sustains you in life until you die.
The Lord’s Supper is not a memorial to ponder the past, but rather a glimpse of the life we now enjoy as part of the new covenant. Both the wine and the bread are a living testimony of everything Christ did accomplish after His resurrection from the dead.
Jesus is setting up this memorial supper so in future, when we do get together and break the bread and drink the wine.
When He says: ‘But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’ He’s saying, when He returns, we will all be sitting down and drink a cup and toast to the destruction of the evil world system and rejoice together that Christ’s government is now with men, right here on earth.

Mark 14:26
And when they had sung the hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.
Jesus and His disciples followed the Passover tradition, when they sang the hymn or the ‘Hallel’. It is a ‘praise’ Psalm, singing Psalms 113 to 118. At that moment, it was a hymn to thank God upon their return from the Babylonian captivity, the time when they rebuilt the temple to dedicate it to God. On this special occasion, it unearths a far greater meaning. At the Last Supper, the words of especially Psalm 118 must have touched Jesus’s heart, as He knew how literally, and how immediately, they were in the making.
Psalm 118 This first verse of Psalm 118 (1–4) is a direct reference to the new covenant; citing His loving-kindness and His eternal covenant of peace.
As with all the other Psalms, it is prophetic in nature, and they speak of the new covenant.
Psalm 118:22 was quoted by our Lord in the Book of Matthew: ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone the builders rejected has become

the cornerstone. This is from the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.' When the chief priests and Pharisees heard Jesus's parables, they knew He was speaking about them. (Matt. 21:42–45)

- Truly, it is marvellous in our eyes that the Jehovah of the Old Testament did humiliate Himself to live on earth to be known as Jesus of Nazareth; to be rejected by those who should have been the first to recognise His divinity.
- It is truly marvellous in our eyes that the Son of God would suffer and be crucified for the sins of the world;
- To be resurrected as the glorified Christ and the Messiah to procure our redemption.

The Psalm is clear. The Jews did reject their Messiah, but nonetheless, He becomes the Stone to secure the complete structure, to ensure our salvation.

The Apostle Peter had great insight when he condensed three Old Testament prophecies regarding the stone.

'Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. And the Stone of Stumbling and the Rock of Offence.' (1 Pet. 2:6–8)

When we consider all the different denominations today, they all have one thing in common, and that is Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone. The stumbling is when we speak of the risen Christ operating in our lives, then Christ (and not Jesus) becoming a Rock of offence, and many shun Him. The dispute is not Jesus healing the blind on earth, but His resurrection.

For multiple reasons, I believe that 'the stone the builders rejected' is the capstone. (118:22) It is the solid 'Stone' to support our faith and eternal life! We now have peace with heaven.

The Pyramid at Giza has many interesting facets, and the outstanding feature is that the headstone was never placed on top of the pyramid. The top is flat and not pointing, as the other pyramids around it. It's a pyramid without the head or the capstone. The pyramid symbolises Christ's body, as all the corners of the pyramid point to the headstone. No other building design other than the pyramid does converge into one stone. The headstone is a replica of the completed pyramid.

Christ is the image of the completed building. As the Pyramid at Giza is half-finished, equally the body of Christ is not complete today. With the rapture of the Church, the Church is complete, and then the capstone will be literally placed on the pyramid.

Pyramids were built throughout the ancient world on almost every continent, and you even find them buried deep beneath the sea. Was Jesus talking pyramid language? – something more than the approved teachings of the Church today. The prime reason why the supposed capstone is never placed on top of the pyramid is Christ's rejection, and

the message of the pyramid is that the world is in total darkness. The mystical capstone to represent the mystical union between us (the four) and God (the five) is missing, rejected by the world today.
We merely need to study the anatomy of our hand to ascertain the importance of the fifth element, as the ‘five’ directs our thoughts to the ‘things above’ or the spiritual. The thumb, or our 5th digit, is vital, helping us to grip anything firmly. Our thumb (5th digit) opposes our four fingers, coming from a completely different angle, thus making it effective. Many monkeys, such as spider monkeys, have a thumb, but their thumb does not oppose the other fingers. If we cannot manipulate our thumb (5), the hand becomes clumsy. A Down syndrome child cannot master the thumb as we do, and they have an inborn difficulty mastering the pincer grasp. We do need the ‘capstone’ or the ‘five’ to direct us to God in heaven. Looking down from heaven, Christ is the capstone, the stone that unites us to God. We, as the Church, are part of Him, His heavenly body or His temple, and Christ is the utmost stone or our head.
The Pyramid on the dollar bill
Today, the all-seeing eye hovering over an unfinished pyramid is the most recognised symbol of the Illuminati. The ‘Illuminati logo’ is seen on the US one-dollar bill. Because America and the Western powers rejected the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, the rulers of this world are fooled, thinking Satan or the antichrist is the capstone. Satan loves to claim what is rightfully Christ’s. I will not be surprised if, soon after the rapture of the Church, Satan will literally place the capstone on the pyramid to taunt Christ. It may be ‘one’ of his many miracles.
Satan is the great impostor, and he is trying his best to beat Christ to ascertain that position. Satan’s power, authority, and kingdom will be in full bloom with the rapture of the Church to confuse the world who remain on earth. The denial of Christ today and His teachings in every public sector of life can lead to only one conclusion. Satan’s goal is to be the capstone; to claim what is rightfully Christ’s.
Christ is our solid foundation, the stone of Israel (Gen. 49:24) and to some a stone of stumbling (Isa. 8:14), a precious tried stone (Isa. 28:16), hewn from the mountain without hands. (Dan. 2:45)
Indeed, the stone is Christ, and the Pharisees knew He was speaking to them, the builders who refused the stone. The other builders or labourers employed the ‘Stone’, and we know who they are. While Jesus was rejected by some, He was chosen and exalted by God. The kingdom will be taken away from the Jewish nation to be given to another.
Many Christians are puzzled, thinking if the one cornerstone is Christ, then who are the other three cornerstones? Once we grasp the structure of the pyramid, we have no difficulty explaining that Christ is our head – the topmost stone. The Psalm never speaks of the temple, but symbolically it does via the stone – as we are the building blocks of God’s temple in heaven. The four foundations of the pyramid portray our humble origin, as we are made from the dust of the earth, but the capstone is our gateway to heaven.
Another puzzling verse in Psalm 118 is verse 17: ‘I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord. ’

It is easily misinterpreted, thinking our Lord will not die. No, once He dies, He will not remain in the abyss.
The Lord disciplined me severely, but He has not given me over to death. (118:18)
Our Lord was disciplined, and He had to face every temptation as we do. He had to learn to be obedient. Jesus was equal to us, and He had to learn from the Scripture the way He was destined to follow. The Book of Hebrews says:
During the days of Jesus's life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His humble submission. Even though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (Heb. 5:7–8)
Jesus on earth had to learn obedience from the things He suffered. Isaiah 28:16 says our Lord is a tried stone, meaning He endured all the temptations like we do, but He never sinned. ‘For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.’ (Heb. 4:14–16) The sufferings we experience every day can only strengthen our faith. In the Book of Hebrews, unbelief is equated to sin, and obedience articulates faith.
The greatest fear in life is death, and our Lord too had to face the hurdle – to willingly die for us. He too was human, and He was tempted not to die – but He did bridge the difficulty to willingly die with His crucifixion. It must have been His greatest temptation of all, especially when all His disciples deserted Him.
‘Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them.… This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.’ (118:19, 20)
Indeed, Christ is ‘the door for the sheep’ (Jn. 10:7), contrasting Him with the religious leaders who didn’t really care for the sheep. The sheep are vulnerable and totally dependent on the Shepherd; Christ is the doorway to lead us to a total new creation. The world is ensnared by Satan, but with Christ’s resurrection, He opened an ‘exit door’ leading us to a new way.
‘I will give thanks to You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation.’ (118:21)
God answered Jesus’s prayer when He resurrected Him from the dead. The ‘Stone’ which the builders rejected did become the capstone. Who in the Old Testament lived in Egypt to be exalted? It was Joseph, and the obelisk does picture him as the firstborn.
The earliest obelisks were known as ‘ben-ben’ stones, translated as son-son, a direct reference to the firstborn right. I believe the obelisk symbolises the firstborn right cherished by the Church today. The obelisk is hewn from a solid rock, and it is tipped off by the pyramidion shape, which distinguishes an obelisk from any other monument.
The Assyrian capital, Nineveh, too, is translated as a son. The root-verb of Nineveh is nun–nun, meaning to propagate or increase. Jonah preached to them, and they repented to portray the repentance of the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

‘Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ (118:25–26)
They are the words a multitude of people who were singing at the moment when Jesus descended down the Mount of Olives riding on a donkey. They again sang this hymn at the Passover feast.
‘The Lord is God, and He has given us light. March in a festival procession with branches to the horns of the altar.’ (118:27)
It seems to be a difficult verse if our minds rummage on the slain beasts of the Old Testament. Our minds need to be drawn to the holy and living sacrifice who is the resurrected Christ. His blood or His life will save us. The climax is not His death, but His resurrection. We are drawn with the cords of love, which are more than all the burnt offerings put together; the sacrifices that were brought to the altar. Christ renders us acceptable to God.
Some translate the verse as: ‘Tie the offering with ropes to the horns of the altar!
’The many fibres of a rope are twisted and complex. They picture the intricacy of the new covenant and the truths regarding Christ. The many fibres are traced via the symbolism of the Old Testament, and they do find each other in the truths of the New Testament. They all come together in Christ. Luther translated the verse as ‘adorn the feast with leaves,’ as with the Feast of Tabernacles. (Lev. 23:40) The heathen nations used to strew their altars with green herbs and flowers.
According to Jewish traditions, each Israelite used to tie some branches into a bunch, to be waved, and it is known as the ‘lulab’. It is a festive palm-branch waved during the Feast of Tabernacles.
At the altar, we do service to God. Four horns were mounted on the corners of the altar. (Ex. 27:2) In the Bible, the horns usually suggest power and kingship. It advocates a king, his reign or his kingdom. The four horns on the altar of the burnt offering and the altar of incense suggest Christ’s kingdom to rule the world. The blood of the sin offering needed to be smeared on the horns, and some of the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar. (Lev. 4:25, 30) It symbolises Christ’s redemptive work (via His resurrection and not His death) to reach all humanity.
The altar turns to ‘life’ once the blood is poured upon it, sprinkled on the four horns, advocating that Christ will rule the entire world. The Psalm invites us to the altar, to the feast with branches in our hands, to enjoy the fruits of the new creation. The feast will commence with His resurrection, when Christ’s life (blood) is poured on the altar to redeem us. He went to the Mount of Olives where His life ended, and 44 days later, He physically ascended from there to heaven.

Mark 14:27
Then Jesus said unto them, ‘All ye shall be offended in Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I have risen, I will go before you into Galilee.’ Peter said unto Him, ‘Although all be scandalised, yet I will not.’ And Jesus said unto him, ‘Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny Me three times. ’

The truth is that the disciples will abandon Him, and they will be scattered like grain thrown on the fields. This prophecy is valid to Judah, Judas and His disciples, as shortly afterwards, each of them will forsake Him. Even that dark side of the disciples' life was prophesied. When the disciples abandoned Him, they were likened to the Jewish nation who were dispersed, but the end result is that the Gospel did spread to the uttermost parts of the world. The real crux of the matter is our response to the resurrected Christ? It is not our attitude to Jesus but to the resurrected that will determine our fate. All the people, including His disciples, forsook Him, even with the best intents.
'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered' is also prophesied by Zechariah.
It is written in Zechariah 13, wedged between many prophecies made from Zechariah 12 to 14.
Zechariah 12 speaks of the new covenant, and Zechariah 14 about the Day of the Lord, when the Jewish nation does repent.
Many prophecies are made from Zechariah 12 to 14, and each of them is addressed to the Jewish people and NOT the Gentile people. Daniel 9 is similar. They concern the throne of David. It is a personal matter between the Lord and Judah who forsook Him. It will be a rude awakening for Judah when they do see the wounds inflicted by them. Doubting Thomas is like the Jewish people today who refuse Christ until they see His wounds. The sufferings caused by the great tribulation will make Judah cry to Jehovah for help, and He will. To their astonishment, they will notice the wounds in His hands.
Upon the day of their repentance, He will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zech. 12:10)
At that moment, we have reached the end of Daniel's 70th week. The Jewish nation was severely punished, and from them a remnant is established. There will be a great revival amongst the people, and at Jerusalem, the throne of David will revive, from the remnant who accepted Christ. Remember, Jerusalem is devastated and not an ideal place to meet their Messiah. At Petra, they will personally meet Him face to face.
As with all the prophecies of the Bible, they have many fulfilments. The precise timing of many biblical prophecies is difficult, and the reason is that it has many fulfilments. An example is the destruction of Jerusalem, as it happened so many times in the past. The other is the outpouring of God's Spirit. It will happen once a person or a nation, such as Israel, does accept the resurrected Christ. Joel 2 says that the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh. The Apostle Peter said on the day of Pentecost, it happened when the world saw the disciples speaking in tongues or in foreign languages. The Apostle Peter said: 'This is what the prophet Joel spoke,' but he could also have said, 'This is what the prophet Zechariah spoke about.' He quoted Joel 2:28.
Joel 2 says His Spirit will be poured out on all the flesh, and until today it is not fulfilled, even though it began on the day of Pentecost. His Spirit is

poured out on every person who accepts Christ, and it's happening today. Until today, the Jewish nation has not accepted Christ, but once they do on the Day of the Lord, it will be evident as on the day of Pentecost.
All the prophecies in the Old Testament were written discreetly to hide many truths from Satan, especially the events before and after Christ's death and resurrection. Satan had all the pieces of the puzzle – but too foolish to put them together. The Apostle Paul spoke of this in 1 Corinthians 2, saying that Satan was oblivious of Christ's resurrection from the dead, and he could not grasp the many truths as written in the Old Testament. To receive the Spirit of God is to be reborn and to be part of the new creation, and we can fit all the pieces of the puzzle.
The reason why I elaborate on this is that the prophecy regarding the sheep that are scattered is forcefully fulfilled when the disciples deserted our Lord. If any person on the day of Pentecost did say Christ could not commence His kingdom on earth, as on the day of Pentecost, maintaining Zechariah 13 is not fulfilled, then it's wrong.
Zechariah 13:1 says on that day (Day of the Lord) a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.
A fountain will be opened, and it's difficult to ascertain if it is the Spirit being poured out on the people or a physical fountain. I believe they are the same. Both are equated to the Spirit. The Spirit can be symbolised by either the water, oil or wine. Therefore, it can be poured out. Each person who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, but the people who refuse Him will succumb.
The next few verses regarding a farmer are very disputed, as the 'farmer' was assaulted and he was wounded. I believe they speak of Christ's crucifixion. Read my notes on Zechariah.
Then follows the passage quoted by our Lord: 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.' Luckily, it is simplified as the translators noticed the Shepherd (written in capital letters) is the Lord Jesus. The Shepherd or the 'farmer' is killed, and via His sacrifice, redemption is accomplished. We need to study Isaiah 53 v. 7, saying: He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. The punishment will also be directed from God towards Him.
Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (53:4)
The sword will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep (the flock) will be scattered. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus said that the Shepherd will be slain, and the sheep, His disciples or the Jewish nation, will be scattered. Zechariah 13:7 continues to say He will turn His hand upon the little ones, and they are the believers from our dispensation, or reborn Israel. The little ones are also mentioned in Matthew 25:40 & 45, and they are the least, forming part of the new covenant. In Matthew 10:42, the Lord sends His disciples or the 'least' who are His disciples.
The 'least' will be gathered by the Good Shepherd. The sheep were scattered, but now they are cared for by the once-slain Shepherd. If the Shepherd does appear on the Day of the Lord, then the Jewish people will

repent and notice the Church who will always accompany Christ. They are the sheep that were ‘scattered’.
Zechariah continues to say that Christ will refine the Jewish nation as silver is refined, and they will be purified as gold. They will call on His name, and He will hear them: He will say, ‘It is My people’: and they shall say, ‘The Lord is my God.’ On the Day of the Lord, the Jewish nation will notice Christ, but it will be fleeting. They will meet Him again at Petra, in a more quiet and peaceful environment. Then they will have time to inspect His wounds – to look into His eyes. He will purify them in the desert (Petra), outside Jerusalem or Israel that is levelled to the ground. I believe when He appeared to the men on their way to Emmaus, they believed in Him when He broke the bread. They noticed the wounds in His hands. Afterwards, He disappeared in thin air. (Lk. 24:31) Similarly, when Israel meets Christ at Petra, they will notice His wounds – and then Christ will disappear in thin air. He will return 33 years later with the battle at Armageddon, to commence His reign during the Millennium

The House of David and Prophetic Promises
The house of David is mentioned frequently (x5) from Zechariah 12:7 to 13:1, to endorse that the verses primarily concern the Jewish people – a personal matter between God and them, and the world is not in the equation. Similarly, Daniel's 70th week concerns only the Jewish people and Jerusalem and not the world in general. ‘Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city,’ Dan. 9:24 or ‘concerning thy people and Jerusalem.’ Only Daniel’s people or the Jewish people are mentioned as they are the first nation in the world God will reckon with. If we don’t grasp this, Daniel's 70th week will remain a riddle. God chose Judah to be a nation of kings, and 2 Samuel 7 details this when God spoke to King David.
‘I will build you a dynastic house.’ 2 Sam. 7:27
God spoke similarly to Abraham and told him he would be the father of many nations, and kings would come out of him. Gen. 17:4,6 Likewise unconditional promises were made by God to David. David’s bloodline will never cease. God also said that David's kingdom and throne would go on forever, and he had no say in the matter. God didn't give David any choice, confirming it would happen. 2 Samuel 7 embraces many promises and is therefore one of the greatest chapters in the Bible. Via Nathan, God spoke to David who had good intentions, as he wanted to build a temple for God. Instead God ‘turned the tables’ and King David got favoured. God made it plain saying He would build an everlasting ‘house’ or a dynasty for King David, unlike King Saul whose dynasty ended abruptly. King David lived luxuriously and he merely wanted to build a house of God or the temple. King David enjoyed a luxurious lifestyle.
There is little doubt that King David had a palace, and why did God want to build him another palace? It goes deeper, as with this promise, it implicates his children. The Bible tells us that Hiram of Tyre (who would later help King Solomon build the Temple) constructed the palace for David: ‘King Hiram of Tyre sent envoys to David, with cedar logs, carpenters and stone masons; and they built a palace for David.’ 2 Sam.

5:11 The Lord announces that he will make a house for David, a dynasty of kings! God will raise up one of his descendants, (King Solomon) and his kingdom will be strong and he will build a house, a temple to honour God. God will secure David’s royal throne forever. When Nathan spoke to King David, Israel was at peace with everyone. In fact David ruled from the Euphrates River to the Nile. There was peace and prosperity. The Israelites had finally settled down in one place, united as one nation under God and David. Well, then, how can Nathan come and say that God has appointed a place for Israel, He would plant them in that place, from where they will never move again, to be freed from their old enemies? 2 Sam. 7:10 Weren't they in their own place? Weren't they at peace with their enemies? And who is thinking of moving? I believe the prophecy is fulfilled when the lost tribes of Israel fled to NW Europe and the British Isles. There will always be a direct, bloodline or descendant of David ruling over some Israelites! Is it possible that in today's modern world they rule? Yes, but only if we reflect on the importance of the lost tribes of Israel. God pinned His promises to King David making them absolute. Jeremiah 31:35-36 says if there's a sun, moon or stars, there'll be a nation of Israel. The only conclusion that can be drawn from these promises is that somewhere in the world, at this minute, there is a bloodline, a descendant of King David ruling over the descendants of the Israelites. God made so many promises and He will fulfil His ‘mission impossible.’ Genesis 49 is a turning point of the Bible when Jacob blessed his sons before he died. Jacob entrusted the firstborn rights to Joseph, or Ephraim his son, but Judah will be a kingly nation. My notes on Mark 10:46-52 do speak at length of Zarah’s family. Since the remarkable birth of Zarah in Genesis 38, Zarah was always known as the 'Red Hand', having lost his birthright to his brother Perez. All things are possible with God. Queen Victoria spent one million pounds to establish her genealogy, and she discovered they were tied to Zarah. The kingdom of Christ will commence from Jerusalem in a most spectacular way. When the Jewish people call on the Name of the Lord, then the Mount of Olives will split in two, forming an escape route through the mountain, to enable them to flee a devastated Jerusalem to go to Petra. Petra is also known as Selah, both can be translated as a rock. The rose-red city of Petra in Jordan is referred to in the Bible. Judges 1:36 Isa. 16:1 42:11 Obadiah 3 mentions Petra where it is known as the ‘cleft in the rock’. Petra is also known as Bozrah, and can be translated as a sheepfold. Petra is an enclosure designed with many steep cliffs to protect them from the elements, solid enough to keep the sheep in and the wild animals (Satan) out. It has a narrow gate ‘Siq’ for entry. Bozrah is the perfect sheepfold! Our Shepherd will protect His remnant during the great tribulation at Bozrah, the sheepfold, the Cleft in the Rock, to protect the remnant coming from Jerusalem. Soon afterwards they will invade Jerusalem from Petra or Bozrah to establish the throne of David. Obad. 3

Mark 14:28–30
But after I have risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29 Then Peter said unto him, although all be scandalized, yet I will not. 30 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before

the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me three times. But he spoke the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said the others.
Jesus warned them they would be ‘scattered like sheep,’ but after His resurrection, they would be gathered at Galilee. They are no empty words but prophetic in nature. The bulk of the people who will accept Him will be from the ‘other fold,’ or the ‘other sheep’ or from the lost tribes of Israel, and not the Jewish people. It follows the grain of this entire Gospel.
Mary went to the sepulchre and she was the first to greet Christ and the angel upon Christ's resurrection. He arranged with her that His disciples had to go into Galilee, where they were expected to see Him. Thus the last words Jesus spoke before He was arrested, and the first words He spoke after His resurrection, are Galilee. Christ spoke the same words to the disciples, and it does not say they should not see Him before their expected meeting at Galilee, as they all saw Him that night except for Thomas, and again 8 days later with Thomas. Later they met each other at Galilee and the Apostle John mentioned the occasion. Christ appeared to them out of the blue when they met at the sea of Tiberius. John 21:1 Christ revealed Himself outside Jerusalem and the world is left clueless. The disciples knew the ‘stranger’ was Christ when they miraculously hauled the 153 fishes. The disciples recognised Him, but only via His mannerism, voice and His way of doing things. Galilee and the Galileans are referred to 67 times in the Gospels, more often than either Israel or Jerusalem in the Gospels. Peter’s denial of Jesus is based on his inherited weaknesses, or our human frailty. After the Last Supper, Jesus took His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane and he told them to be awake and pray while He went off to pray alone. When He returned to them, He found them sleeping. While the other disciples fled, Peter had the courage to follow Jesus after His arrest, keeping his distance, not to be recognised. Fear gripped him and he feared for his own life. The world hated Jesus, and Peter was not prepared to face the ridicule and persecution that Jesus endured. Peter quickly found he wasn’t nearly as bold and courageous as he had proclaimed, and in fear he denied the One who had loved him.
We can ask what went wrong and why did Peter deny Him? I believe the Apostle John gives the reason: ‘He came to his own people, and even they rejected Him including the disciples. Jn. 1:11 We were all tested and we all failed miserably, even if we were in the Apostle Peter’s shoes.
During the Old Testament times the people did not understand the truth as we do today, since we accepted the resurrected. The Old Testament believers including Jesus' disciples did search the truth and somehow they were blinded. That night the kings of the earth and its rulers banded together against the Lord. Ps. 2:2 Our response to the resurrected Christ is vital. To forsake Jesus is natural but to forsake the resurrected Christ is blasphemy. It differentiates the attitude of the Apostle Peter from the Jewish people who rejected Christ. Matthew 12:31 says every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. The world’s attitude towards Jesus of Nazareth will be forgiven, including the disciples' denial of Jesus, but any person who willingly denies the Spirit or the resurrected Christ will not be forgiven.

Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Peter denied Him. Judas portrays the unbelieving Jewish people who denied the resurrected Christ. The Apostle Peter portrays the unbelieving Jewish people, the remnant who did accept the resurrected Christ. We need to invite Christ within our lives.

At first his disciples did not understand all things Jesus was talking about. Only after He was glorified did they understand all the words Jesus spoke to them. Jn. 12:16 They were clueless not knowing how the puzzle fitted together. When Jesus was glorified or raised from the dead, their minds were brightened by the outpouring of His Spirit, and they had a very distinct knowledge of the Scriptures and how they are accomplished in Christ. Today we are in a very similar situation as many Christians are asleep and they deny the free flow of His Spirit. The believers were excused in the Old Testament times leading to the resurrection of Christ, but not today.

The Apostle Peter was very keen to remain at Jesus' side – but he failed due to his inborn frailties.

Many Bible commentators suggest the Bible contradicts itself as with Peter's triple denial of Jesus and the crowing of the rooster. Matthew, Luke, and John say that Peter will deny Him three times before the rooster crows. Mark says the rooster will crow twice, and then you will deny Me three times. We will discover some verses in Mark are not found in some manuscripts. The crowing cock is not the only bird to wake you early in the morning. During the spring and early summer, it's not only the milk-van that wakes you early in the morning. It's the dawn chorus to mark the beginning of a new day. In the United Kingdom, the dawn chorus commences with the blackbirds, then the robins, wrens, thrushes, finches and hedge sparrows. Each day greets us with a possible promise of His return, and thus the purpose why some church steeples are topped with a rooster, instead of a cross. Each dawn of day is coupled with the Christ resurrection, the new covenant and His imminent return. They left the upper room to go to the Mount of Olives, but stopped short at Gethsemane. They had to cross the Kidron, a creek or ravine, a stream smaller than a river. The name Kidron comes from the verb meaning darkness or to mourn. Crossing the river Kidron is like portraying His death. Psalm 116 (part of the lulab) must have echoed in his ears: 'The cords of death encompassed me and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow.' 116:3 It's like descending down the river Jordan, a river of death leading to the 'Dead Sea. '

They went to Gethsemane and the Garden is literally translated as 'garden of the oil-press,' located on the lower western slope of the Mount of Olives. Today the Mount of Olives is a vast cemetery having about 70,000 tombs from various periods. The reason they chose the burial site is they wanted to have a first-hand experience of Christ's return to the Mount of Olives, the first to enter Jerusalem. We know when Christ returns, Jerusalem will be devastated. For sure there will be no glorious return to Jerusalem via the 'Eastern gate.' They bought their expensive tickets in vain.

In the Old Testament, the Mount of Olives is mentioned when David's son Absalom wrested for control of Israel. King David and his loyal followers fled the city via an eastern route: 'David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up.' 2 Sam. 15:30 In this history King David epitomises grace and Absalom the law. It illustrates the differences between the two covenants, of Law and Grace. David was slow to implement the law and the people were not unhappy. Absalom is like King Saul who was favoured amongst the people and therefore the people chose him. Absalom says King David is too slow to implement the law, therefore come to me that I may implement the law to settle all the indifferences. Then Absalom would say, 'Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice.' 2 Sam. 15:4 The law sounds very noble and good but the end result is death and it made King David flee. Paper kills! Our Lord followed the same humiliating path as David. The working of the law has a blinding effect on the people and the Israelites were too engrossed with the law. Beware Satan will blind our minds with the law, and for him the principle of grace is non-existent. 2 Cor. 4:4 'Christ is become of no effect on you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. Gal. 5:4 Law and grace don't blend and similarly the law and the truth. The working of the law forced Jesus to leave Jerusalem, to cross the brook Kidron as King David.

In one of Ezekiel's visions, he saw the glory of the Lord depart from Jerusalem and it rested 'above the mountain east of Jerusalem.' Eze. 11:23 It is a remarkable prophecy as the glory of the Lord went up from within the city of Jerusalem, hovering eastwards towards the Mount of Olives. It is indicative of the Spirit or the resurrected Christ who distanced Himself from Jerusalem and the temple mount. Ezekiel lived at Babylon but in spirit he was at the Mount of Olives. Many believe it is reminiscent of Christ's ascension to heaven, but it's more – It is Jesus leaving Jerusalem, crossing the Kidron and for the past 2000 years His 'Glory or Spirit' settled at the Mount of Olives, outside Jerusalem. It marks our 5th dispensation of grace evading Jerusalem. The lowest part of the Mount of Olives is Gethsemane to portray the dark aspects of our dispensation, our battle with the forces of Satan. Gethsemane is an 'oil press' as via the crushing of the olive, or via death and resurrection, we obtain the oil or the 'Spirit.' We are anointed to be both king and priests. The pressing of the oil will procure the new creation. While this is happening the world slumbers, totally oblivious of the changes procured by Christ via the Church.

The disciples were sleeping and they had no idea of the torment our Lord was experiencing. Today many Christians are asleep as the disciples were, not troubled by the battle we face each day. They are pleased to be tossed about by the turbulent waves. The general aim of many Christians is to know they are 'saved' and going to heaven. That is where it ends – but they are going to lose their reward and the purposes of their life on earth. The prime reason for us being on earth is to find the stepping stone to heaven, who is Christ. Many do find the 'Stone' and are content to sleep

again. It is not the purpose of our life. The Apostle John says: ‘God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.’ 1 Jn. 5:11-12 Our guarantee of eternal salvation is not founded on a few verses in the New Testament. No. Our eternal salvation is verified by 400 verses in the Bible. Sceptics who refute our eternal security cite a few dozen verses out-of-context, not addressing the topic of salvation, but mainly our rewards in heaven. If you accepted Christ, your name is written in the Lamb's book of life and you will go to heaven. A body without a spirit is dead, and likewise faith without works is dead. James 2:26 They are saved but spiritually dead Christians. That verse is taken out of context to attempt to create a works-based system of righteousness. James is not saying that our works make us righteous before God but to prove that real saving faith does yield good works. Works are not the cause of salvation; works are the proof of our salvation. Christians who argue they can lose their salvation will stumble. They keep looking in the garbage bin, deciding what is good and what is wrong. This is a serious sacrilege. Gal. 3:1-3 In other words, if a person can lose his salvation then he must have a list of things of ‘must do’ and ‘do not do.’ If there is such a list, then the person is guilty of achieving salvation by keeping the law, contradicting Romans 3:28 and 4:1-5. Romans 4:5 says, ‘To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.’ That verse addresses our redemption.

James 2:26 says faith without works is dead. They are the works to decide our final reward in heaven. Our life on earth is like a race we run. We are enveloped in a serious battle, not to be sneered at or taken lightly. The rewards are enormous. God will reward us immensely if we do well in the race – by abiding by the rules as detailed in His Word. Rom. 2:10 The Apostle Paul tells us to run our spiritual race with all our might, to be focussed on our divine calling, looking unto Jesus the finisher of our faith. Heb. 12:2 If we sleep and lack the essential works, we are saved having no reward. We will be saved but found naked. Foolishly they stopped running the race and do not qualify to obtain a reward. We need to be confident like the Apostle Paul: ‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.’ 2 Tim. 4:7Your attitude must be, ‘I’m going to run this race, and I’m going to finish it and I’m going to obtain the prize! I’m not going to live my whole life missing out on the things God planned for me!’ There is no conflict as some Scriptures address our salvation and the others like in the Book of James address our works as part of the new covenant. Faith without works is dead because it reveals a heart that has not been transformed by God. The Apostle James did not speak of our salvation, but he raised the possibility of us losing our real purpose in life, to accrue a great reward. We must not sleep to end up abandoning our real purpose in life.

Mark 14:32–42
And they come to the place which is named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, Sit ye here while I pray. 33 And he takes with him Peter and

James and John and began to be alarmed and to be anguished 34 and said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch. 35 And he went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. 37 And he came and found them sleeping and said unto Peter: Simon, sleepest thou? Could thou not watch one hour? 38 Watch ye and pray; enter not into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is sick. 39 And again he went away and prayed and spoke the same words. 40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy), nor did they know what to answer him. 41 And he came the third time and said unto them, Sleep on now and rest; it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of the sinners. 42 Rise up, let us go; behold, he that betrays me is at hand.

This passage makes me think, wondering what I would have done if I was in Peter's shoes. The disciples were sleeping and oblivious of the great battle our Lord experienced. I believe not much has changed as many in the Churches are sleeping today. At this moment in time there is a great battle in heaven and Satan and his angels are about to be thrown on earth. When people sleep they run the risk to believe the lie, to shun the truth. They continue with their daily chores and have no interest in the 'signs of the times,' the events on our doorstep. They have no interest in prophecy and think the creation of the European Union is the second most important prophetic development of this century after the rebirth of Israel. Today the continent is in turmoil and we need to ask if the true Babylon in the Bible is really the 28-member European Union falling apart? Aren't we deceived? Perhaps the real Babylon will be the 'real Babylon,' the revived Greek Empire that belonged to Alexander the Great. Babylon will be its capital. They are easily deceived in thinking that evolution is the generally accepted view and many will not even try to contest it. The natural course of life is degeneration and not evolution. Many birds that used to fly have lost their skills. A chilling reality is what will happen if we humans degenerate down the evolutionary ladder. It will make you shiver when you read what Paul Cooijmans wrote in his book: 'Human degeneration. '

The night Jesus was arrested, before his trial and crucifixion, He prayed alone at Gethsemane, after having asked the disciples to wait nearby, to pray that they would not give in to temptation. Luke tells us, 'He withdrew about a stone's throw and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done. "' Luke 22:41-42 At Gethsemane, He must have been tempted not to die on the cross. He wanted to die for us to save us, and we will never understand the cost. God is the Word and He became flesh and dwelt amongst us. Jn. 1:14 All things were created by Him, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him. Col. 1:16 He descended to earth to die the most brutal death. So why do we assume that God who left Heaven and came to earth and lived a perfect life would desire to go

through such an ordeal? Jesus knew he had to die, but even towards the end he asked if there was no other possible means.
It is not that Jesus wanted to change His mind. He merely learned from the Father what His will was. All along He was committed to adhere to God’s plans and will even if He had to die a horrible death. He did not change His mind. Our Lord’s submission to the Father’s will was never in question. If there is any demand, it is to find what the Father’s will is. He is simply seeking one last ‘reading,’ to accurately know His Father’s will. And even at this, there was never really any doubt. Jesus was probing the matter of the cross to secure and achieve our salvation. The answer became obvious, and if there were any other way Jesus would not have gone to the cross, and the Father would not have sent Him. Jesus dreaded ‘the cup’ the difficulty Jesus to be possibly removed. Why was ‘the cup’ so dreadful? What is inside ‘the cup’ to which Jesus the Lord Jesus is referring? It is the cup of God’s wrath. No wonder our Lord was ‘sorrowful and troubled’ and His soul was ‘overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death’ His agony is the cross that loomed before Him, to spare us from drinking the cup. Our Lord was terrified of His looming death. Naturally death is our greatest fear to all of us.
An angel from heaven appeared to strengthen Him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:43-44Fortunately for us, the term ‘strengthened’ is found once more in the New Testament, in Acts 9:19, when the Apostle Paul is ‘strengthened’ after taking some food. He fasted for three days since the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Here, it is evident that Paul’s strengthening was physical in nature. It would seem that our Lord’s strengthening by means of an angelic ministry at the end of His temptation was also primarily physical. It says that our Lord was sorrowful to the point of death. I take this very literally, and not in some metaphorical sense. Luke, who is a doctor, relates the disciples’ drowsiness to their physical frailties, exhausted from their sorrows and grief. Luke 22:45 If the disciples felt disheartened, with the little knowledge they had of the situation, how much more the sorrows our Lord must have affected Him. He tells us that Jesus’ agony was so great that ‘his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.’ I believe His sorrow was so great that He was virtually at the point of death. I believe if He had no supernatural provisions, brought by the angel from heaven, Jesus would not have died on the cross. He would have died in the Garden of Gethsemane. So great was His agony at the thought of the cross and everything it entailed, almost causing His death. The physical boost was in my mind enough to empower Him to undertake the physical and emotional demands of His arrest, trials, and crucifixion. His mind was ‘set’ at Gethsemane, to absorb everything thrown at Him.
Certainly, our Lord was tempted not to bear the shame of the cross, tempted like us, and therefore the Apostle Paul says He can sympathise with our weaknesses, tempted in every way, but He never sinned. Heb. 4:15 Jesus was willing to set aside His own desires to conform them to God's will. Jesus had His own will and it never conflicted with His Father's will, in total submission to Him. We can explain the Garden prayer in this

way: Father, I cannot fulfil my destiny at the cross if I am not revived here in the Garden. In fact, God did answer Christ's prayer in the Garden via the means of the angels, sustaining Him to face the horrors of His crucifixion, with the joys of our salvation set before Him. During the night He prayed what is perhaps the most remarkable prayer in the Bible. John 17 A prayer for each of His disciples and us, seeing He would leave them and He could not sustain them with His physical presence. He commended us to God. The greatest fear in us is death, and continually we fight decay, to maintain our health. We tend to hold fast to the things we have, not to erase them from our memory. It is the main reason why we capture them on a camera. It is our inherited instinct and our Lord followed a path directed against His own human instinct. He had the option to opt out of it, but He didn't. How many times do we have good intentions – but when it comes to the final 'push' we seem to opt out of it. Jesus said – not my will but yours be done. We who are made from the dust of the earth are different. The Apostle Paul eloquently says he doesn't really understand himself, as he wants to do what is right, but he doesn't do it. Instead, he does what he hates. Rom. 7:15

The suspense of Jesus's final hours is – will He steer from the path He had to follow? We are at the pinnacle of world's history and our redemption is on a thread and the disciples were totally unaware and sleeping. The theologians may retort and say the disciples had too much alcohol and what do you expect?

We too are caught in a spiritual warfare and we are the children of God. Hebrews 12 says we have the means, and we can study the Bible, to reflect on so many true believers' lives. We too need to run a race set before us as them. We will never resist sin to the point of shedding our own blood. Esau sold his birthright for a single meal but afterwards he desired the inheritance he rejected. He had no chance to repent, and his tears did not help him. We too are going to be sad if we know what we have lost through sleeping or lack of interest. Our Lord was sorely distressed praying to Abba Father. 'Abba' is Hebrew for Father, and 'Father' is a Greek translation. In 2 other verses the word 'Abba Father' appears in Paul's letters. Rom. 8:15 & Gal. 4:6 A possible reason for mentioning both names is to draw our attention to the real meaning of the word Abba – or father, as found in the Old Testament. The Hebrew language has a totally different concept to ours. Our understanding of the word father is a father-son relationship or procreation, but in the Old Testament it has a far greater connotation. The Hebrew word 'ab' (Strong's no. 1) or father is generally defined as the benefactor, the one who gives. We only tend to think of our biological fathers but in Hebrew it has a far greater meaning.

In the Old Testament the people who earn respect are called our fathers, as the prophet Elijah 2 Kings 2:12 and the priest. The fathers are also the people who taught us our basic skills. Jabal was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock, Jubal was the father of all those who play the lyre and organ and Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron. Gen. 4:20-22The father is the benefactor and he commands the son who is the 'builder' to accomplish his wishes. The son

(Strong's no. H1121) fulfils the Father's wishes and He makes it happen. The word father or ‘ab’ occurs 1212 times in the Old Testament, a word having so many meanings. Some query if Jesus had two Fathers? Is He the Father as mentioned in one of John’s letters? 1 Jn. 1:3 Is His Father the Spirit, as Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Matt. 1:18,20; Luke 1:35 Who is the real Father? Some say the Holy Spirit was merely the Father's agent in conception, compared to artificial insemination. We do raise many questions if we merely think of the ‘father’ in biological terms.
At least 100 times in the Gospels Jesus called God His Father. What does it actually mean? Was God His biological Father or does it have a totally different meaning? We need to study the claims Jesus made Himself.
He was sent to earth by the Father. Jn. 14:24; 5:26 He is the eternal God who created everything. Jn. 1 His enemies sought to kill Him because he made himself equal with God. Jn. 5:17 From a human point of view, it made Him die. The charge was blasphemy. In the parable of the vineyard: the owner sent his son to the vineyard, and they killed him. Matt. 21:33-46 The reason is he was the son. In other words, there would have been no cross without Jesus’ claim to be equal with God the Father and the heir of all things. Jesus’ using the “Father-Son” language is meant to teach us and the people before His crucifixion that He is equal to the Father in nature but subordinated to the Father in His mission. His mission made Him the lowest of the low but He BECAME the Son of God via His resurrection, and not with His birth at Bethlehem. He is the Son or the builder to commence a total new creation. Upon His resurrection, He became the Son of God. ‘Declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead.’ Rom. 1:4Several times Jesus confesses that He is not able to do anything on his own. He is completely dependent on the Father. The Father loves the Son so he shows him all things He is doing. There was an inseparably intimate relationship, a perfect union with God untainted by sin. There was nothing which came between Jesus and the Father. Jesus was utterly submitted to God’s desires. Consider the following verses how Jesus perceived his own capabilities in relation to his Father:

- Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. Jn. 4:34
- I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. Jn. 5:30
- For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. Jn. 6:38

The Lord Jesus had his own will but willingly He subjected them to God, to fulfil His mission. The Book of Hebrews 10:9 speaks more of God’s will: ‘Then he said, here I am, I have come to do your will. He sets aside the first to establish the second.’ Hebrews 10 exposes the weaknesses of the old covenant and the perfection of the new covenant. The differences are like between a shadow and the reality it reflects. The Old Testament law and the Levitical priesthood with all of its sacrifices was but a shadow of the ‘good things to come,’ only to be established by the resurrected Christ. Jesus was no priest on earth but He became the great High Priest

after the order of Melchizedek. The message of the Book of Hebrews is the resurrected Christ as with His resurrection, He got rid of the old and He paved the way to a total new creation. When He said; ‘I have come to do your will,’ is at a time when He was seated on the right hand of God, as our High Priest, to be glorified the Son, to be the builder of a total new creation. 10:12 It did not happen with His incarnation at Bethlehem. Only the Christ can say after His resurrection: ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.’ Matt. 28:18Jesus experienced hunger and tiredness and He enjoyed a meal and rest as we do. He walked, talked and cried like any of us. He was totally human and with the flick of a finger, He could have claimed His heavenly attributes. Satan tried to tempt Jesus on the Mount to persuade Him to parade His heavenly powers, but He refused. Our Lord can deal gently with our infirmities, since He Himself also is beset with weakness. Heb. 5:2 The resurrected Christ offered His resurrected body as a living sacrifice to God. On earth Jesus did not qualify to be a High Priest, but He does today. That is the core message of the Book of Hebrews. As Christ offered His body, we too need to offer our body as a living sacrifice to God. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, by absorbing the Word of God making it part of our life. Some Christians think they can discern God’s will via the gift of prophecy – Sorry to say there is no easy way out. The only means is to be transformed is to absorb God’s Word, learning it through all our hardships. Then it becomes part of us, to discern what the perfect will of God is. Rom. 12:1-2 Jesus knew at Gethsemane what God’s will was and He pondered on Psalm 23. ‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.’ 23:4 He merely ‘walked’ through the deepest dungeons of hell to conquer it, always assured that God would resurrect Him from the dead.

Romans 12 v. 2 continues to say let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. He rejoiced knowing what He would accomplish via His death, thus ignoring the shame of dying a criminal's death to defeat sin and death once and for all. He rescued us!

Our Lord’s Prayer was answered and the angels were sent by God to fortify Him. Throughout His crucifixion, He was composed and as a lamb He was led away to be slaughtered. He did not protest or even open His mouth.

Mark 14:37–42

[37]And he came and found them sleeping and said unto Peter: Simon, sleepest thou? Could thou not watch one hour? [38]Watch ye and pray; enter not into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is sick. [39]And again he went away and prayed and spoke the same words. [40]And when he returned, he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy), nor did they know what to answer him. [41]And he came the third time and said unto them, Sleep on now and rest; it is enough, the hour is come; behold,

the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of the sinners. [42]Rise up, let us go; behold, he that betrays me is at hand.

Jesus returned to His disciples after secluding Himself to pray. Oddly, He called Peter by his first name, Simon. By birth, the Apostle Peter is called Simon, and there must be an obvious reason why, on this occasion, he is named Simon.
At that moment in time, while the apostles were sleeping, the redemption would be taken from the Jewish nation and it would be given to another house of Israel, to Simeon who represents the 'other house'. This chapter highlights the dissimilarities between Judas and Simeon. Translated into Hebrew, Simeon means to listen or to obey. He is often cited in the Bible and I will name two.

- In the history of Joseph, when there was a great famine in Canaan and Egypt, he told his other nine brothers to fetch Benjamin, keeping Simeon in prison as a guarantee, and the reason was to assure the return of Benjamin, Joseph's real brother. While Simeon was locked in prison, he was assured of food and water. Simeon in prison envisages the time of the Church. We too, who are part of Christ, are imprisoned, but we will never thirst or hunger.
- Simeon in the New Testament was looking for the consolation of Israel. Luke 2:25-35. The consolation of Israel is the promised Messiah. In this remarkable history, Simeon was told by God, 'You will not die until you see the Messiah.' He saw Jesus, even though He was just an infant – he realised he had seen God's salvation, and he was ready to die. He was from the 'other house'.

The disciples fell asleep and three times they were woken up. Many believe the time when the disciples fell asleep to be woken foreshadows the history of the Church. The Church, or us, is continually tested and tried to prove the real qualities of our faith. As Christ's return approaches, He urges us all the more to get up and pray so that we will not fall into temptations, or fall asleep, to be oblivious of what's approaching.
Whenever Jesus tried to wake His disciples, it corresponds to the time of a great awakening or the revivals in the Church's history. The Reformation of the Church in the 16th century is a classic example, but sadly soon afterwards they slept again.
The seven letters in the Book of Revelation are more specific to roughly describe the Church's history. They are special messages directed to each Church, whether they obeyed Christ or not, commencing with Christ's resurrection until the end of God's mystery, or when the earth enters the Millennium.
The history of the Church could also be portrayed in the history of the Apostle Paul, when he was shipped to Rome. When they sailed the waters, a sudden violent storm arose.
There were 276 people in the boat and their lives were in danger. The first reaction of the sailors was to stabilise the boat and put down anchors, but it did not help. The first reaction of the soldiers on board was to kill the prisoners, to prevent them escaping, as if the prisoners could escape into the violent waters and live. There was no way to save the boat, yet Paul

told them that unless they remained in the boat, they could not be saved. The boat was smashed to pieces close to the shore, and God kept His promise and they all reached the shore safely. When the boat broke to pieces, all the men were able to swim or float on boards to reach the shore. It portrays the Church today in a boat riding the turbulent waves, weathering the storms swept up by the Gentile nations. Once we accept Christ we will experience the storms, but all of us will be saved, guaranteed to reach the shore.
‘Watch ye and pray; enter not into temptation.’ Pray not to be tempted. There are many other similar passages in Scripture. They are meant to alert us mainly of Satan working in the dark. 1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 3:2-3. To be watchful is not to change the events of the world, since we know how the world will end. Our priority is to acquaint ourselves with the Word of God, recognising we are not part of the world. Jesus turned His back to Jerusalem leading Him to Gethsemane, and similarly we too need to go the other way, not following the path the world is leading us. We are knowledgeable, and can hear the approaching footstep of the Antichrist, the evil spirits, to torment our world. We are not the pawns to change the events of the world or enforce our opinion to try and change matters. The world detests spiritual matters and they can't grasp the truths like we do. It all sounds foolish to them. They are asleep and will never understand the events surrounding Christ’s return. The world was resolute to crucify Jesus and similarly the world today detests the born-again Christians. We will never conform to their planned new world order, and with the rapture of the Church, the world will be too pleased with our sudden disappearance.

Mark 14:42-44
‘Rise up, let us go; behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand.’ And immediately, while he yet spoke, Judas came, who was one of the twelve, and with him a multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, ‘Whosoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him and lead him away securely. ’
When Jesus spoke to Simon, His tone must have dropped suddenly seeing Judas appearing with a gang. It says He spoke to one of His twelve disciples, to the Jewish people or Judah and not Simon (other house). The final outcome of Jesus’ crucifixion did not hinge on Judas’ betrayal, but the final response of the Jewish people. Judas portrays Judah, and Jesus said in Mark 14:21, the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago, but woe to the ‘one’ (the nation) who betrayeth him. They crucified Jesus with the blessings of the Gentile nations, and no nation on earth would have done otherwise.
The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him, who eagerly arrested Jesus. The contingent were well armed and possibly feared an uproar in an attempt to rescue Him. Judas led them to show them where Jesus was. He did not sleep like the other disciples, but he acquainted himself with Jesus’s enemies to plan an opportune moment to arrest Him. They tried to

minimise the response of the crowds to prevent a possible uproar, thus they arrested Him in total darkness. The wicked men are diligent in their accomplishments.
The leading priest who accompanied the men should have defended the Word of God, being the leading member of the Sanhedrin. They colluded all night against God's appointed Servant.
They had trouble finding their way and it must have looked comical when they probed their way in the dark. They refused the light of the Gospel, living in total darkness. They had no clue where they were. The people who trust the law are always in the dark pretending to seek the truth, envious of God's working in us who believe. We have the light and we need no torches to guide us.
Judas was given a mean task to betray Jesus with a kiss. Shortly afterwards the Apostle Peter said: 'It was necessary for the Scripture to have been fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, the one having become guide to those having arrested Jesus.' Acts 1:16.
Judas gave them a sign by which they should know him, to take hold of Him, and lead Him away safely; a guide to manage the whole affair. Judas personified all of Israel who deserted Jesus, and it includes all His disciples.
The Apostle Peter said David spoke of Judas and there are a few Psalms we need to remark upon.
Psalm 3This is a Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son. We know King David followed the same route as Jesus when he fled to Gethsemane.
'LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. There are many who say of my soul, there is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of my head. … 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. '
To King David, Ahithophel was like Judas who betrayed him. He was one of David's most trusted and closest men, just as Judas was one of only 12 disciples who went everywhere with Jesus. David loved Ahithophel – he was a brother with whom they would share bread in close fellowship together. Psalm 55:12-14. In this Psalm, David's emotions are expressed that go hand in hand with being betrayed – pain, anguish, despondency, fear, shock… but what hurts most is that it was a friend, someone close. Christ's suffering begins with Judas' treachery. Judas' betrayal hurt Jesus and John said: 'He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.' John 13:21. Judas had free will and he was no robot. In fact he was given the ultimate privilege of being with Jesus. Ahithophel spoke to Absalom and advised him to go after David with 12,000 men to do away with him. Ahithophel's plan wasn't followed so he departed, went home, and hanged himself. 2 Samuel 17:23.
What does it teach us? Absalom was perfect from head to toe. 2 Samuel 14:25-27. According to the Bible, there was no one like Absalom who was perfect, with no blemishes from the top of his head to the sole of his feet.

He was a handsome man and he got complete Israel behind him. He would have won the election. Obviously democracy did not work this time. King David never had anything wrong to say about Absalom. Absalom pictures the law that is perfect, and King David does picture grace. By nature men deem the law greater than grace.
The Psalm continues to say that many did rise against the Lord and surely it was not only Satan. The religious leaders cohered with Satan, and in this instance he used the Jewish nation, the Sanhedrin and the Roman army to arrest Him. Natural man is not made in the image of God and Jesus proved the contrary when He said the religious leaders of His time belonged to their father, the devil. John 8:44.
Psalm 27 vv. 1-3
'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. '
The evildoers are His adversaries and foes, and they will stumble and fall backwards.
The Apostle John mentions the occasion when His adversaries stumbled and fell backwards.
Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him (as He was familiar with the Word of God) came forward and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' 'Jesus the Nazarene,' they replied. 'I am he,' Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) As Jesus said 'I am he,' they all drew back and fell to the ground! Once more he asked them, 'Who are you looking for?' And again they replied, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' … 10 Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave. 11 But Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?'
Once Jesus said to them, 'I am He,' they drew back and fell to the ground backwards. Not only did Judas and his compatriots stumble and fall backwards, but the complete Jewish nation will stumble – and it happened when they disappeared into the Egyptian captivity.
Psalm 40 vv. 14-15
'Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life; let those be turned back and brought to dishonour who delight in my hurt! Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"'
This Psalm teaches us not to mock at others in their misery, lest the same fall on their own necks.
Psalm 70 vv. 2-3'Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life! Let them be turned back and brought to dishonour who delight in my hurt! Let them turn back because of their shame who say, "Aha, Aha!"'
Isaiah 28 vv. 7-10: The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink; … they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean. 'To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk,

those taken from the breast? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. ’
Isaiah 28 sketches a grim picture of Israel living in spiritual drunkenness. The people are intoxicated adhering to the law – line upon line, and they can't see the forest for the trees or notice Christ in the Scriptures. To them it seems like one great mass of confusion. The Scriptures make them fall backwards, reeling like drunk people. Once we accept Christ, we can understand the Scripture and every piece of the puzzle fits. For the same reason Jesus spoke in parables, so the multitudes do not understand but His true believers will. Luke 8:10.
The table speaks of closeness, a place where we chat and exchange our ideas. Their tables are full of vomit, and there is no ‘space’ for God or His Word. Our love for the Word of God binds us together, and we eat whatever the Lord presents, and the Lord’s Table is the core of our Christian culture.
The people observing the law are intoxicated with its many principles – line upon line, and they can't see the forest for the trees or notice Christ in the Scriptures. To them it seems like one great mass of confusion. The Scriptures make them fall backwards, staggering in their path of drunkenness. Once we accept Christ, we can understand the Scripture and everything falls in place, making sense, a light for our feet. For a reason Jesus spoke in parables, so the multitudes do not understand but His true believers will. Luke 8:10.
Sadly most Christians admire the ‘inductive Bible study’, a method to study the Word of God, line upon line, precept upon precept. They approach God’s Word focusing on three basic steps asking themselves: what does it say, what does it mean, and what does it mean for my life? If they do approach God’s Word in that manner, the principles of the law are esteemed, and Christ is not in the equation. The Spirit of God opens the Scriptures to us because He has opened our hearts to the truth. It is the Spirit who interprets spiritual truth to those who are spiritual. The natural man cannot grasp the real spiritual truths. 2 Corinthians 2:12-14. So before attempting any Bible study method, we must be sure we have the Holy Spirit living in our hearts 1 Corinthians 6:19 through faith in Christ.
That is the reason why our Lord repeated to Israel a second time with the phrase: the Word of the Lord was to them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, that they might go and fall backward, and be broken, snared and caught. Isaiah 28:13. They are entangled with the Chabad and its many rules and rituals to steer their lives.
God’s response to the Jewish nations is that He will speak to them via a people of ‘strange lips and with a foreign tongue.’ Isaiah 28:11.
Indeed the New Testament is written in Greek, in a foreign tongue. We don’t need to preach the Gospel to them in Hebrew, as God will speak to them in a foreign tongue. The revival of the Hebrew language began in Europe and Palestine toward the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century, through which the language's usage changed from the sacred language of Judaism to a spoken and written language used for daily life in Israel today. When the Jewish people returned from the Babylonian

captivity, they spoke Aramaic. Aramaic is still taught within Israel, but only for religious purposes. It is a dead language, like Latin, so you are not likely to find anyone easily in Israel who can speak it.
The Word of God is entrusted to the heathen people. If the world or the Jewish people refuse the Gospel, then they are encumbered by the working of the law, the Ten Commandments, the yeast working its way into the dough. They fall backwards, stumbling over the stone and the law proves to be a burden, too heavy to master.

Mark 14:45-47
And as soon as he (Judas) was come, he went straightway to him and said, 'Master, Master,' and kissed him. And they laid their hands on him and took him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword and smote the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.
This history is written in all the Gospels and the Book of John, and Luke says more. Malchus the wounded is named in the book of John. Luke says Malchus was healed by our Lord and it is considered the last miraculous healing act Jesus performed before He was crucified. He did not thank our Lord as with a previous miraculous healing by Jesus when He healed the ten lepers. Only one returned to thank Jesus, but the other nine left not thanking Him. The people who were healed by Jesus shared their testimony. Malchus was not different from the nine lepers. He received the healing yet he felt no obligation, no desire to be openly grateful for what the Lord did for him. Perhaps these persons are representative of the world we live in today. Shortly Christ will return to earth and as the time is drawing near, we sense a coldness to the resurrected Christ. Being blessed on earth with richness and yet ungrateful for what He has done. This is prevalent in the world today. There is no mention of Malchus anywhere else in the Bible, which makes it reasonable to conclude that he lived the remainder of his life in silence – knowing what Jesus did for him. What a sad way to live a life, consumed with ourselves, denying the miraculous working power of Christ. Are we like the nine lepers who left without recognising Jesus?
The name Malchus occurs only once in the Bible, and it comes from the common Hebrew noun 'melek', meaning king. His name is associated with Judah who is a kingly nation, foreshadowing what's about to happen to the Jewish people.
Symbolism plays a great part, as his right ear is severed, portraying that Israel will not listen. Isaiah 28:23; 42:18. They are deaf, and Bible symbolism agrees that the right side is the 'right side' and anything coming from the left or west is wrong.
The religious leaders or many theologians do retain something from God's Word but it is from the left – the wrong side. They keep the left or the 'law' and reject grace or Christ, and love to study the Bible using the inductive study method, to bolster themselves – failing to notice Christ in the Scriptures.
If we only study the law, the do's and the do not's – then the Word of God is directed against us. We need to acquaint ourselves with the right, to notice God's saving grace.

When Moses descended down the mountain with the stone tablets, it says that the tablets were written on both sides; on the front and the back. Exodus 32:15. There are two aspects of the Word of God, and we will discover that the one is the obvious and the other the mysteries of His will. It unfolds the hidden and the revealed truths of God or the old and the new.
When we study Psalm 119, we ask the question if it is possible to delight in the law? The world has enough rules and our natural inclination is to flout them. It's only possible to delight in law once we notice the 'right' or God's saving grace.
The unbelieving Jewish nation's ears will be plugged, but the other house (10 tribes) will accept Christ and their ears and their eyes will be opened. It is like Jesus healing the deaf and blind. Judas will be blinded and Simeon or Simon Peter will experience the working of God's grace.
'Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!' Acts 28:28.

Mark 14:48-50
And Jesus, answering, said unto them, 'Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not, but it is this way that the scriptures might be fulfilled.' And they all forsook him and fled.
The prophecies concerning Jesus and the resurrected Christ are hidden in the Old Testament, foretelling His place of birth, details of His life, His mission, His nature and His death and resurrection. The prophecies are sometimes called 'Messianic prophecies', because they refer to the Messiah, which means 'the Anointed' or 'the chosen One'.
When the gang of people advanced on Jesus, armed with swords and sticks, He knew deep inside the Scriptures are being fulfilled. He asked why meet Me like this, and why didn't you do it when I preached to you? The reason is that the 'Scripture might be fulfilled'.
The words seem senseless to us, not satisfying our curiosity. What is the real motive – to only fulfil the Scripture?
Our Lord had a totally different perspective and throughout His life – He asked if He succeeded in His purpose and did He fulfil the Word of God. He was born like us not knowing the alphabet, but when He studied the Scriptures, He knew they were speaking of Him. As He walked on earth, He fulfilled every requirement of God. The only important issue to Him was to fulfil the Scripture, not following His directive or will, but the will of His Father. When He saw the gang heading towards Him, He ticked the box knowing another prophecy is being fulfilled. He knew what would happen, and was one step ahead of them. His main purpose is to adhere to the Scriptures and He knew He had to die. The disciples said only on the last night: 'Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.' John 16:29. Why did it take them so long to understand God's working in Jesus? Jesus did not spend all His energy to try and persuade the Jewish people, but He knew afterwards, since His resurrection, things will change. He sought no revival.

Christ executes the complete Word of God, giving it feet. Each step Jesus took, what Christ does for us today and tomorrow, does fulfil some prophecy and He remarked about it. It boosted His mission knowing He is on the right path. All the Scriptures are satisfied only through His accomplished work. Luke 24:27. Scripture will explain itself.

- He alone accomplished what the law required. Matthew 5:17–18.
- All the promises God made in the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That is, when you have Christ, you are part of the promises God made through Christ. All of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding 'Yes!' 2 Corinthians 1:20.
- The law was kept perfectly by Christ. He was the ransom to redeem us, to pay all the penalties set against us – they were all poured out on Christ. Therefore, noticeably the law is not the path to righteousness, Christ is. The ultimate goal of the law is to find Christ and to thank Him as we fail to accomplish its requirements. The law will trip us proving our sinful nature. Romans 10:4.

Christ changes everything and He ceased all the blood sacrifices, as they all pointed to Him. He is the final, unrepeatable sacrifice for sins. Hebrews 9:12. His blood or His life secures our eternal redemption, cleansing us daily, ending the hierarchy of the previous Old Testament priest that stood between us and God. Hebrews 7:23–24. The physical temple at Jerusalem ceased to be the centre of worship. Now Christ Himself is the 'place,' the 'tent,' and the 'temple' where we meet God. We have no Mecca or Jerusalem on earth. John 4:21–23; 2:19–21. Mark 14:51

And there followed him a certain young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

Jesus had no help from His disciples but God's angels strengthened Him. Only the resurrected Christ could bring about our salvation, and thus He had to do the work alone. Somehow I believe the man dressed in a white robe has a secret message. It is only mentioned in the Book of Mark and he was at the prime of his life. Probably the young man is a disciple, and many deem him to be John, as he outlived each of them. Whenever John is pictured, he is recognised as having no beard.

The young man wore nothing else other than a linen cloth. We may think it's odd. During the Old Testament times, people seldom wore underwear but the high priest did wear one and it is known as breeches. Leviticus 6:10. Don't think badly of the 'young man' as he is like a true Scotsman wearing a kilt, as they too wear no undergarments. The linen cloth is translated from the Greek word 'sindon'. The word is used four times in the New Testament, to describe the cloth in which Jesus' dead body was wrapped for burial, and here. There ought to be a connection of the young man, the burial of Jesus or the resurrected Christ? The young man reminds us of the resurrected Christ – the new generation to commence a total new creation.

Later the Book of Mark 16:5 says when they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. Mary was shocked, but another angel said, don't be alarmed, He is risen from the dead! The motif of the clothing reinforces the impression that the two

episodes form a coherent whole. Mark often mentions clothing as the clothes of John the Baptist in Mark 1:6 to identify him as a prophet, and, therefore, as an important figure at the beginning of the Gospel. The clothing of Jesus in the episode on the transfiguration in Mark 9:3 becomes dazzling white, ‘whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.’ The nature of the clothing underlines the mysterious significance of the event. With the crucifixion of Jesus, the High Priest tore his clothes after Jesus said: ‘You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Matthew 26:65. These references to exceptional clothing are found at crucial points. The young man, eager to follow Jesus after others failed Him, also falls into shame, running away naked. The young man at the tomb also has a special place, the first to give witness to Jesus' resurrection. Symbolically speaking the young man does picture the resurrected Christ who left the glory He had to enter into heaven. He abandoned His right to rule the world. At present, He does not claim His kingdom or the linen robe, but they are in the hands of His adversaries. It is the sign to the Jewish nations that He will leave this world ‘naked’ and His kingdom will not commence. If today we search His kingdom, it will be with the Church or with the other 10 tribes of Israel.
Who else escaped the tyranny of our earth at the expense of his garment? It was Joseph who worked as a slave at Potiphar’s house in Egypt. One day Potiphar’s wife asked Joseph to sleep with her. When he refused her, she caught him by the coat, and he escaped leaving it in her hands. She used it as evidence, to falsely accuse him of attempted rape. It is similar to our Lord Jesus who went to Jerusalem to seek those who were lost. As the woman (Jewish nations) caught Him (Jesus) by the coat, similarly to Joseph, Jesus did forsake the Jewish nation to leave them vulnerable. Previously Joseph was forsaken by his brothers, stripped from his multi-coloured coat when he was thrown into a pit or well. At that time it pictures our Lord’s death and resurrection.
When Joseph escaped the woman, he got rid of his garment as Christ who left us to go to heaven.
Potiphar had two houses, his own and the prison. Joseph left the one house to go to the other house or to prison. Similarly Jesus left the one house (Jewish nations) to go to the other house – the 10 lost tribes of Israel.
If a person loses his clothing, he loses his status. Willingly Elijah gave his official garment to Elisha, to be entrusted with Elijah’s calling. 2 Kings 2:13. Elisha’s possession of this mantle was a sign that Elisha continued with the work Elijah commenced. Elijah depicts Jesus and Elisha the resurrected Christ. In the near future Christ, as Elisha, will return to claim the garment that is rightfully His.

Mark 14:53
And they brought Jesus to the high priest, and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.
The trials before the Jewish authorities, the religious trials, proved that the Jewish leaders hated Him, ignoring many of their own laws. They tied

Jesus and led Him to Annas who awaited Him in the darkest hours of night. We should note that John calls Annas the high priest. John 18:13-14. The high priesthood was a life office. According to Moses, Annas was high priest, but the Romans had given the office to Caiaphas, so that Annas was high priest until he died, but Caiaphas holding the office but not necessarily by legal right. As the legitimate high priest and the head of the Sanhedrin, they sought his blessings, looked to Annas before sending him to Caiaphas. He questioned Jesus for the purpose of obtaining, if possible, some material out of which to frame an accusation.

Who is the Sanhedrin?
After the Babylonian captivity the Sanhedrin is established and the body is recognised by the Roman Empire. They had limited powers and they were not allowed to execute anyone. In God's eye the Sanhedrin embodied the Jewish people. They dominated the Jewish people throughout the Gospels and the Book of Acts. Thousands of Jewish people did accept Christ – but their repentance could not tip the scale to favour the Jewish nations. The decisions the Sanhedrin made – was binding to God.
The word Sanhedrin is translated from a Greek word meaning 'assembly' or 'council'. God commands Moses to 'bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people.' Numbers 11:16. The great Sanhedrin was the supreme court of ancient Israel, made up of 70 men and the high priest. They met in the temple at Jerusalem and were the ones to whom all questions of law were finally put. Much later in history the Sanhedrin was dissolved after continued persecution by the Roman Empire, and there are attempts today to revive the institution. Today Israel is ruled by their cabinet of ministers.

- Who were the high priests during Jesus' crucifixion?

Annas and Caiaphas were the two ruling high priests during Jesus' public ministry. Luke 3:2. The high priests were taken from the Sadducees. The Romans removed Annas from the office, yet behind the scenes, he was powerful. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at the time of Jesus' ministry.
The examination before Annas proved useless yielding no evidence for a fair trial before Pilate. Annas then sent Jesus away to Caiaphas the current high priest. 'So Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.' John 18:24. Annas therefore sent Him bound … is written in the 'aorist tense'. There is no hint if this happened in the past, present or future. The exact sequence of Jesus' early trial before the Jewish authorities are not clearly spelled out, but their enemies and the Sanhedrin were determined to kill Jesus, Matthew 26:3-4, and charged Him with blasphemy. Gleefully they watched His crucifixion. John 19:21.
The councils did represent Israel and the Jewish people in the past.

- Moses

The main feature of Exodus 18 is the advice Jethro (Moses' father-in-law) gave to Moses. He says Moses' responsibilities were too great and that he should delegate some of his duties to other capable men. It is part of a framework of what would become part of the government of Israel. Deuteronomy 1:9-16. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and he made

them heads over the people; rulers, governors, judges, and officers. Exodus 18:21. A team of 70 elders had been selected as the governing body of Israel under the leadership of Moses.

- Daniel

During Daniel's time there were several prophecies that needed to be fulfilled in order for the Jewish nation to be restored. The seventy years of Jeremiah's prophecy 25:11-12; 29:10 concerning the captivity of Judah would soon expire. Jerusalem and their land is overthrown as Jeremiah had prophesied. The second part of that prophecy was that the Jews would return to their homeland. The fulfilment of those prophecies; to return to their land was also somewhat reliant upon Israel's repentance when they were in captivity. Daniel was troubled by the continuing failure of the Jews to repent while in captivity, and most likely wondered if God was going to extend their punishment beyond the seventy years He prophesied. Daniel was pivotal at that moment in time. In fact then Daniel was the second in command to all the high officials of the royal government of Babylon. He had the means and the power to pray for 'his people' and Jerusalem. It was no ordinary prayer. He confessed his people's sin. He, like a true intercessor, did not distance himself from the sins of his people, but rather confessed with them and for them. God does not need to be told about sin in order to be aware of it; rather, He wishes to hear confession of it. It is evident that God's Spirit stirred up the Jews in answer to the prayer of Daniel. The intercessor who stands with his people and confesses their sins will often be the one through whom God will bring about revival. Ezra 1:5. God heard and answered Daniel's prayer because it was prayed according to His will, as Daniel represented 'his people' and Jerusalem. He was their mouthpiece. When Daniel repented, all the Jewish people repented in God's sight – even though most did not repent openly. With the hearing of Jesus, the Sanhedrin was the mouthpiece of the Jewish people, and they represented all the Jewish people, even though many of the Jewish people did accept Jesus' teachings. In turn Jesus represented all of us, when He carried our sins.

- Mordecai

Mordecai is first mentioned in Esther 2 and he was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, lived in Susa, the capital of Persia, and had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. He acted as a father to Esther. When Esther was selected as one of the virgins to possibly be the next queen of King Ahasuerus, Mordecai advised her not to reveal her Jewish background. Mordecai, who worked at the palace gate, hears of an assassination plot against the king. Mordecai reports the plot to Esther, and the queen passes the intelligence on to King Ahasuerus. The would-be assassins are stopped, and Mordecai's name is recorded in the king's chronicles as the one who took action to preserve the king's life, attaining a formidable position at Persia. As a Jew, Mordecai would only bow to the Lord God of Israel. Haman was a true hater of the Jews and he was focused to destroy Mordecai, and the Jewish people. Via the intervention of Mordecai, Esther and King Ahasuerus, Haman was summarily put to death on the very gallows he had erected for Mordecai. The Jews were given permission to defend themselves. The Jews successfully overcame Haman's evil plot.

The final verse of Esther 10:3 notes, ‘Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes (Ahasuerus), preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.’ Mordecai embodied the Jewish people.
With the crucifixion, the Jewish people were represented by the Sanhedrin and their actions were binding.
The tyranny of the Sanhedrin did not end with Jesus’ crucifixion, but it persevered. The Book of Acts describes how the Sanhedrin harassed and threatened the Apostles. The healing of the man at the Temple and Peter's sermon attracted the attention of the chief priests. Peter and John were called before the council and warned not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus. Acts 4:5-21. When the apostles continued to preach, the council had them arrested. Acts 5:21. Stephen had to appear before the Sanhedrin on charges that sounded like the false charges against Jesus. Acts 6:12-15. After Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, the Roman commander asked the council to examine Paul to decide what Paul’s crime was. Acts 20:30; 23:28. The chief priests and elders were part of a plot to have Paul assassinated as he was led to another hearing before the council. Acts 23:13-15. The Jews at Rome did not accept the Apostle Paul’s message and thus the Gospel went to the Gentile nations or the other house. Acts 28:28. The Sanhedrin steered the Jewish nations into the Egyptian captivity.
There were some members in the Sanhedrin who did accept Jesus’ claims. Nicodemus is an example. I am not sure if all the members of the Sanhedrin did convene together, but most were there.

Mark 14:54-60
But Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest, and he was seated with the servants and warming himself at the fire. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death and found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their witness did not agree together. And there arose some that bore false witness against him, saying, ‘We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’ But neither so did their witness agree together. So the high priest, standing up in the midst, asked Jesus, saying, ‘Answerest thou nothing to what these witness against thee?’
When Jesus' trial was about to commence before the high priest, a nameless disciple went inside the courtyard because he was personally known by the high priest, whereas Peter was relatively unknown and hindered to enter the courtyard. John’s Gospel says:
‘Simon Peter and another disciple followed them as they brought Jesus to Annas. (Now the other disciple was acquainted with the high priest, and he went with Jesus into the high priest’s courtyard.) But Simon Peter was left standing outside by the door. So the other disciple who was acquainted with the high priest came out and spoke to the slave girl who watched the door, and brought Peter inside. The girl who was the

doorkeeper said to Peter, “You’re not one of this man’s disciples too, are you?” He replied, “I am not. ”’ John 18:15-17.
The fact that the slave girl allowed the other disciple inside and not Peter is a bit puzzling. The Apostle Peter may have been reluctant to enter inside lest he might be recognised by the people to a disciple of Jesus or he was stopped because he was an unknown person trying to enter into a sensitive area. The unnamed disciple is closely associated with Peter and had special knowledge, and urged Peter to come inside to witness the trial of Jesus. He used his influence to allow Peter inside the high priest’s court, and the ‘unknown disciple’ followed Jesus boldly.
Most commentators think the nameless disciple is John and why did he enter ‘boldly’ and not Peter? John came from Galilee and why would he be known to the high priest? The Apostle John frequently speaks of himself, without mentioning his name; and supposedly was known to the high priest, by carrying fish to his house, and selling it to him as a fisherman? He used to be in the fishing trade. I believe it’s far-fetched and he used to fish at Galilee! The other disciple can be either Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea. Both of them were members of the élite in Jerusalem. Luke 23:50; John 7:45,50 and had ready access to the high priest’s house and they will be known to the doorkeeper. Regarding the fact that the ‘other disciple’, along with Peter, followed Jesus and the arresting party to the high priest’s house, both Joseph and Nicodemus would probably have known of the plot to arrest Jesus, eager to know the outcome. The unknown disciple could have been the man at whose house Christ had the Passover. Mark 14:12-16.
Whoever it is – I believe the unknown disciple had great influence and he was known to both the high priest and Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus, to be buried in his grave. He had ‘bargaining powers’ and he used it at a very appropriate time and he too buried Jesus in his grave. Peter was timid but Joseph used his powers. I believe Nicodemus who approached our Lord during the night – was too fearful.
Caiaphas made a remarkable statement after Lazarus was raised from the dead:
‘Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish. ”’ John 11:49-50.
Lazarus caused a great roar amongst the Jews and at that time the chief priests and the Pharisees called together a meeting. Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would soon die for the nation, and not only for them but for all of God’s children, wherever they are scattered too. At that assembly they were determined to kill our Lord. The reason is Lazarus portrays the high priest of the new covenant and Caiaphas the high priest of the old covenant and therefore the mentioning of the death of our Lord. The days of the old covenant are numbered. Lazarus had to be loosened from everything that used to restrict him – meaning the law. It was Lazarus’ bondage to the law. The whole nation will perish and Jesus’ death did not avoid the demise of the Sanhedrin. They knew if they (Sanhedrin)

accepted Christ, it will spell the end of the temple, the Old Testament sacrifices and Talmud, leaving them in financial ruin.
They led Jesus to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest. When Jesus cleared the temple less than a week ago, He chased the money changers from the temple, Mark 11:15, and the high priest in charge was Annas. Annas was curious and he enquired about His disciples and His teaching. John 18:19. Jesus didn't answer his first question, but as to His teaching, was told to question the crowds. Jesus said He spake openly to the world; teaching them in the synagogue, and in the temple, and did nothing in secret. Why do you ask Me now? Ask them who heard me talk.
Jesus was struck by an officer after he said this. John 18:22. When Jesus was struck He said: ‘If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you hit me?’ John 18:23. Jesus was in perfect control and when He was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not. 1 Peter 1:23. He endured extreme suffering while being completely innocent. Our human instinct is to return insults. Jesus refused to retaliate to the insults, inflicted upon Him by the angry mob, the religious leaders or the Roman guard. When Annas was finished questioning Him, he had no answer. He was silenced and judged. Then Caiaphas had his turn. John 18:24.
Matthew 26:57 states that Jesus was taken to the house of Caiaphas the High Priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. Mark 14:53 states that Jesus was taken that night ‘to the high priest’ (without naming the priest), where all the chief priests and the elders gathered, and Mark 15:1 adds that they convened another consultation amongst the priests when daylight appeared.
Luke 22:54 states that Jesus was taken to ‘the high priest's house’ (without naming the priest), where He was mocked and beaten that night. It continues to say, 22:66 ‘as soon as it was day’, the chief priests and scribes gathered together and led Jesus away into their council.
In John 18:12–14, however, Jesus is first taken to Annas and it appears that Caiaphas sought Annas' confirmation of Caiaphas' actions.
Throughout the trial Jesus speaks very little, responding to questions from the priests, prompting an officer to slap him. The high priest was intrigued by His unusual response and asked: ‘Why answerest thou nothing?’ Matt. 26:62 Unlawfully the men mocked, blindfolded, insulted Him verbally and physically at the high priest's house, slapping Him and asking Him to guess who had hit Him.
The chief priests sought witnesses against Jesus to put him to death and none were found. They were forced to arrange false witnesses, Mark 14:55–59 but the irony is their false witnesses did not agree. They wanted a watertight case, to appease Pilate. The politicians and the journalists excel in this field, to twist and to distort the truth. The Sanhedrin were not bothered about the laws of Moses and their only concern was a tight defence to execute Him before Pilate. Many false witnesses appeared and one of them said He heard Jesus say: ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’ Mark 14:56–59 To them it’s not plausible and they laughed while

the others asked what He insinuated. What did Jesus suggest when He said, ‘and in 3 days I will raise it up’? He will resurrect on the third day, He said. Remember what John says: ‘I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.’ Jn. 10:17–18 He lays it down for our sin. He takes it up again. When they destroy the temple, He builds another temple in 3 days. The earthly temple will be destroyed and He will build another one in heaven. It happened upon His resurrection from the dead. The Jewish people sought a sign Jn. 2:18 and they got it. At all costs they wanted Him dead and due to the presence of the Roman soldiers – they could not stone Him to death. The Psalms are riddled with revenge psalms, and they are a puzzle to many Christians. The reason is they are meant for His enemies with Christ's return to earth. The Psalmist seems to pray for the destruction of his enemies, to summon evil or to curse his enemies. Psalms 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 109, and 139 were written by David to ask God to bring judgment upon His enemies. These prayers were written to vent his anger upon our enemies, and they are prophetic in nature, the words that are placed on our Lord’s tongue. They are not meant for us as we are called to be gracious and to forgive. Jesus quoted some of the Psalms in John 15:25 when He quotes Psalm 35:19 and 69:4, and also the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:9–10, when he quoted Psalm 69:22–23. The Psalms were inspired by God and they ought not to be our selfish prayers begging for revenge. Through God's righteousness will reign once His vengeance is poured out on all the evil people and governments until His anger is satisfied. At that moment His greatest enemies were the Jewish people who refused to accept Him.

With Christ's return, His anger will be focussed on all the unbelievers, when He is revealed from heaven in blazing fire and the Church will accompany Him. We too will judge the evil men and the angels. Each revenge psalm in the Bible will be fulfilled to all the people who snubbed Him. 2 Thess. 1:7–8 During Jesus’ trial the sins of the world were placed on Him. He carried them all along and He must have felt like King David who confessed His sins in Psalm 51. The burden King David experienced is a foretaste of the burden Jesus placed on Himself, when He left heaven. He left behind His glory to be humiliated. He was stained by our sins, and a like question is from what time did He bear our sins? Was it since His experience at Gethsemane or on the cross? I believe it was since the time of His birth to become like one of us. At Bethlehem He became man and willingly He placed our sins upon Himself, and Psalm 51 is prophetic in nature. It says He took our sins, and placed the load upon Himself. His mother received Him in sin – the sin that was placed upon Him. The Psalm says my mother accepted me in sin. Since His birth He willingly carried them and it includes each person who lived on earth. He died with them at Calvary, to finally unload our sins at Hades. All the Psalms are Messianic in nature and each of them speaks of the life Jesus lived on earth or about the resurrected Christ. Psalm 51 is one of them, as more than King David speaks in the Psalm. The Apostle Peter spoke about the Psalms and he testified that the Psalms do speak of Him.

‘For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;’ Acts 2:25When David wrote the Psalms, he always had God in mind, the work He accomplished in our Lord and Saviour. Similarly when Jesus lived on earth, God was always before Him; to ultimately end His life in total obedience. He knew the road ahead and He made no attempt to escape. He had set His face like a flint to accomplish the task He had undertaken, Isa. 50:7 Isaiah says: Surely He took up our infirmities upon Himself and He carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth Isa. 53:4–7

Mark 14:61–62
But he was silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said unto him, I AM, and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of the heaven. Jesus had no reason to answer any of their questions, but He did once the issue of His deity was raised. Why did the Sanhedrin say the ‘Son of the Blessed’ and not the ‘Son of God’? It is to avoid using the Name God. They seem to make a point of not mentioning His name. Instead, they vaguely refer to Him as ‘the Almighty,’ ‘the One Above,’ or the ‘Eternal.’ The Lord instructs us to ‘proclaim His name,’ Isa. 12:4, Ps. 105:1 ‘chant praises to His Name,’ Ps. 68:4 and He speaks highly of anyone who ‘knows My name.’ Ps. 91:14 The book of Matthew doesn’t say ‘the Son of the Blessed,’ but the ‘Son of God.’ Matt. 26:63The Lord answered then unconvincingly with the words: ‘You said it.’ At that moment in time our Lord was not yet the exalted and He did not want to be known as the ‘Son of God,’ but rather as the ‘Son of Man.’ Let me explain. Our Lord felt so humiliated and debased carrying the load of the world’s sin, but once He entered death to unload the burden of our sins, then matters would change to be raised as Christ – the beginning of a total new creation. Then He would be rightfully known as the ‘Son of God. ’
In the Gospels our Lord is frequently referred to as ‘the Son of man.’ Matthew x 30; Mark x 14; Luke x 26 and John x 10. He speaks of Himself in this third-person manner, and most Christians today think Him being known as the ‘Son of man’ stresses His humanity, experiencing life as we do. In the book of Daniel, we read of the Ancient of Days and afterwards He is referred to as the Son of Man. Dan. 7:9–13 Jesus who walked on earth is known as the great ‘I am’ and He was before Abraham, the ‘Son of man’ who faced Caiaphas, to be resurrected and to claim what is rightfully His. In this trial our Lord Jesus explains that He is the ‘Son of man’ as prophesied in Daniel’s vision.
Caiaphas lost his patience and asked Jesus point-blank to confirm who He really was. He was direct in claiming to be the Son of man. Caiaphas, unlike the crowds, knew exactly what Jesus meant and He lost His temper,

tearing His priestly garment. They realized whenever Jesus called Himself ‘the Son of man,’ He had been identifying Himself as the righteous and everlasting King of kings in Daniel’s vision. Dan. 7:13
The literal meaning of the word ‘son’ in the Bible is different to ours. We tend to think of a ‘father–son’ relationship but it goes much deeper. Whenever the word ‘son’ appears it can be translated as ‘an heir,’ someone who has been appointed to receive an inheritance. An heir is a person who receives something of value from a father. The New Testament portrays Jesus Christ as God’s ‘firstborn’ Son, Heb. 1:6 that is, Jesus holds the ‘birthright’ and He is the rightful heir of everything the Father possesses. Heb. 1:2 God has given Christ all of creation as a gift, because everything was created for Him. Col. 1:16; John 3:35 Remember the death of Jesus meant the death of the complete old creation and thus the question of the ‘Heir.’ Christ opened the way to a total new creation. We are co-heirs with Christ Rom. 8:17 meaning we have been given the privilege of sharing Christ’s inheritance. We are treated as firstborn heirs, Heb. 12:23 receiving our inheritance through faith as Jesus did. In the Gospels our Lord is known 80 times as the Son of man, and only 28 times He is referred to as the Son of God. On earth Jesus carried our load of sins and He paid the penalty. He embodied us in every aspect and the problem of sin is not our problem but our Lord’s. Thus with Jesus' trial, He carried our sins representing ALL of humanity. Thus He is rightfully known as the Son of man. To Adam many promises were made: ‘God said, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ Gen. 1:26 Adam failed but the ‘Son of man’ will succeed and He alone will rule the earth with His co-heirs. Since Christ was resurrected from the dead, He became the ‘Son of God.’ Rom. 1:4 As the true Firstborn, He is the heir of God’s throne. Once we understand this – we will not tend to think of a father–son relationship, and not ask silly questions such as why He is known as both the Son of man and the Son of God. The reason is He is the beginning of a total new creation and as the Firstborn – He will inherit EVERY title and deed. Caiaphas knew the gravity of His claim. He is the Son of man as He alone will inherit everything entitled to us and the Son of God, as everything entitled to God, belongs to Him as part of a total new creation. ‘Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.’ 2 Cor. 5:17 It is my favourite verse.
Jesus replied: ‘But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven. ’
The risen Christ or the Messiah has many titles and the ‘coming One’ will be known as the ‘Son of man.’ The Sanhedrin were so glued to their traditions and their greed for money – they did not want to swap their lives. They knew once they accepted their Messiah, then the old covenant and Jerusalem would be destroyed. The crowds once asked Jesus if He would remain forever but He assured them ‘the Son of man must be lifted up’. He was telling them, and John tells us He was telling them, as plainly

as he can, that he would be ‘lifted up’ with His resurrection. He was telling them He would die and then would draw all men to Himself to be lifted from the demise of our world. We need a helping hand and as the resurrected, He purifies us each day. John 12 continues to say He would be with them a little longer to later disappear. They would have the light a little while longer, and they needed to walk while they had the light, before darkness overtook them. John 12:35–36 The ‘Son of man’ would be lifted up to heaven to be known as the ‘Son of God.’ Christ would disappear to heaven to later return as the Messiah, to claim what is rightfully His.
Jesus standing before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, was not the ‘Glorified Christ’ to return to earth. At the moment the humiliated Jesus said: ‘My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, My attendants would fight that I might not be betrayed to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here.’ Jn. 18:36 The resurrected Christ is now seated on the right hand of God – He is the mighty hand of God accomplishing all His mighty works. Today we have a saying describing your helper as your right-hand man. It refers to someone who helps you with all your work, someone you can trust. Today all of God’s wishes are fulfilled by His right hand. Christ is the heir of all things, and the exact imprint (spitting image) of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. Heb. 1:2–3 We who are co-heirs with Christ, are made in the image of God, and not Adam who failed. Jehovah of the Old Testament is the capsule of God and similarly the resurrected Christ is the true image or capsule of God. On earth He is known as the ‘Son of man’ and with His resurrection, He claimed more titles. The Sanhedrin were so blinded by their anger and whatever Jesus said seemed like blasphemy. It fell like water flowing from a duck's back.

Mark 14:63–65
Then the high priest rent his clothes and said, What need have we any more for witnesses? 64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 65 And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to buffet him and to say unto him, Prophesy. And the servants struck him with the palms of their hands.
Tearing your clothes in public used to be a powerful expression of grief. More than 39 times we read of people tearing their clothes and it seems almost theatrical to express such strong emotion to vent either your disgust, anger or loss. The first mention of someone tearing his garments in Genesis, is when Reuben discovered his brothers had sold Joseph as a slave. Reuben was shocked and he ‘ripped his garments apart.’ Gen. 37:29 When their father, Jacob, was told that his son Joseph had been killed by a wild animal, he ‘tore his garments apart.’ Gen. 37:34 Job ‘tore his garment’ when he heard that all his children had been killed. Job 1:18–20 A messenger ripped his clothes when he brought the tragic news to High Priest Eli that the Israelites had been defeated in battle, that Eli’s two sons had been killed, and that the Ark of the Covenant had been captured. 1 Sam. 4:12–17 When Josiah’s secretary read to him the words of the Law, Josiah ‘ripped his garments apart’ noticing that the Israelites were sinning

against Jehovah. 2 Kings 22:8–13 I believe the reason why Caiaphas ‘rent his clothes’ is when he accused Jesus of blasphemy. Matt. 26:59–66 The Sanhedrin defended the notion, it was blasphemy to use God’s name in vain. So they made a rule that if anyone heard God’s name spoken out loud, he had to tear his clothes. The Jews are taught to revere God Himself, so they are taught to revere His Name, and they were not allowed to even utter His name. The sheer act of renting your clothes to express your disapproval is equated to an English judge placing a black cap on his head, convicting a person to death.
The rules of the high priest were that they were forbidden to uncover their head, or rent their clothes. When Caiaphas rent his garments, he transgressed the law of Leviticus 21:10. He followed a Jewish tradition. What matters most to God is our heart, it needs to be ‘torn apart’ to be truly repentant. Joel 2:13 said: ‘Rip apart your hearts, and not your garments, and return to Jehovah your God. ’
The garment which Caiaphas tore was his ordinary garment, the garment he chose to wear as the president of the Sanhedrin – not the outfit as officiated in the book of Leviticus. We need to study the garment of the high priest as it is rich with symbolism. When the Sanhedrin gathered to prosecute Jesus, the two high priests opposed each other, the one High Priest is soon to be seated in heaven on God’s right hand Mark 14:62 and the other high priest fulfils the high priestly order of Aaron, or Caiaphas. Aaron used to wear seven pieces of clothing and head gear Lev. 8:7–9, Ex. 28:39–43 and each of them does portray something of Christ. The first clothing was the breeches or underwear, the second the linen tunic and then the robe or garment. I will concentrate on the garment. The garment had to be intact and the High Priest's head had to penetrate the collar of the garment. The collar was woven, never allowed to be cut or torn. The collar is like a modern-day ‘polo neck. ’
‘There is to be an opening in its top in the centre of it, with an edge all around the opening, the work of a weaver, like the opening of a collar, so that it cannot be torn.’ Ex. 28:32 The ‘opening’ of the garment is defined with the following three words: The word ‘hole’ stems from the Hebrew word ‘peh (Str. no. 6310) ’ which is usually translated as ‘mouth’ or ‘commandments.’ The word top or ‘head’ (as used in some translations) stems from the Hebrew word ‘rosh’ (Str. no. 7218) which is almost always translated as ‘head, chief’ or ‘start.’ The word ‘binding’ stems from the Hebrew word ‘saphah’ (Str. no. 8193) which is usually translated as ‘lip.’ The 3 words have something in common as Christ is the Head or the Word of God. The Words are uttered by His lips. The Head is Christ, and He is highly exalted, and now He reconciles us to God. The head had to pierce the opening in the ‘centre’ of the robe. That word is derived from the Hebrew ‘tavek (Str. no. 8432) ’, meaning the ‘inner’ or ‘the centre point’. The word appeared in Genesis 2:9 where the tree of life is said to be in the centre of the Garden of Eden. The head, or Christ, is now in the centre of creation where He reconciles us to God. The garment with the hem was not supposed to tear. Nevertheless it happened with Ezra and typologically with Caiaphas, the last high priest. Matt. 26:65 Before Caiaphas tore his garment, he heard Jesus claiming to be the High Priest

sitting on God’s right hand. Caiaphas tearing his garment signals the end of Aaron’s priesthood. At that time, the veil in the inner sanctuary did tear: the priesthood of Aaron ended to make way for Christ’s High Priestly duty. It paved our way to the inner Sanctuary. Our own mouth splits (upper and lower lip) when we speak. Samson tore the lion’s mouth. That particular lion is the Lion from the tribe of Judah, and it suggests Christ. Rev. 5:5 Samson tearing the lion’s mouth Judges 14:4–18 is likened to Caiaphas tearing his garment, and Jesus dying with His crucifixion. We are competent to answer the riddles Samson posed to his guests, as we did meet the true Christ! Judges 14:12 Honey proceeded from the lion’s mouth. The word ‘bee’ (Str. no. 1682) stems from the Hebrew word ‘dabar’ (Str. no. 1696) which is similar to ‘the Word of God’. The bees who nested in the lion’s mouth, making a hive of honey. Honey is a product of the new creation that enlightened Jonathan’s eyes, 1 Sam. 14:25–43 and ours today.

The Apostle Paul’s first recorded miracle was the healing of a paralytic man who was crippled from birth. When Paul and Barnabas healed him, the crowd believed them to be gods. ‘They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker.’ Acts 14:12 The priest of Zeus prepared to slaughter some bulls to honour the occasion. Hermes (with the wings on his ankles) was a Greek god the son of Zeus. He was quick-acting and able to move swiftly between the world of man and the world of gods. Thus he is a messenger and they thought the Apostle Paul was one. Paul and Barnabas objected to this and they ripped their garments apart and begged the crowds not to be worshipped. What should have been a momentous occasion turned sour. The Jewish leaders, coming from Antioch, poisoned the minds of the people of Lystra. The once-worshipping crowds vented their anger to Paul and pelted him with stones until he lost consciousness. They dragged his battered body outside the city gates, leaving him as dead. Similarly we must not think that the Gospel of Christ will benefit us financially, as many pastors do. We need to suffer outside the city gates, bearing His reproach. Heb. 13:13 The mere act of Caiaphas tearing his garment needs to draw our attention to the priests' garments of Aaron. It did tear and it spelled the end of the old covenant, proved to be obsolete with the tearing of the ‘veil’ in the temple. Ultimately it led us into the inner Sanctuary, into heaven itself.

Mark 14:66 – 72

66And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there came one of the maids of the high priest; 67and when she saw Peter warming himself, looking upon him, said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68But he denied, saying, I know him not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. 69And the maid seeing him again began to say to those that stood by, this is one of them. 70But he denied it again. And a little after, those that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agrees unto it. 71And he began to curse and to swear, saying, I do not know this man of whom ye speak. 72And the second time the cock crew.

And Peter called to mind the words that Jesus had said unto him, before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me three times. And thinking on this, he wept.

I never expected the Apostle Peter to denounce Jesus in this manner. At first, Peter was questioned by a maid and was asked if he was one of His disciples; then a maid plus some bystanders asked him; and finally, a whole crowd wanted to know. His denial progresses from a plea of ignorance, to a denial plus an oath, and then to cursing and swearing with a total denial that he ever knew Jesus. The Apostle Peter's unique dialect confirmed he was from Galilee. Then the sound of a rooster shook him as he realised that Jesus did predict the three denials.

Both Judas and Peter were remorseful, but the big difference between their sorrows is that Judas's regret (Matt. 27:3) and despair ended in finding no solace. Peter experienced the same sorrows, but it went beyond regret—all the way to a changed life, by accepting the resurrected Christ. Moreover, Peter said three times that he loved Jesus, and he portrays the Jewish nation who sinned but did accept the Christ, unlike Judas.

From God's perspective, we are frail, and all our frailties are not hidden but vividly portrayed in His Word. The Bible is not silent about them, and we can learn from the main characters in the Bible, such as the Apostles Peter and Paul. We are steered, expecting to obey a general code of conduct, but even with our best intentions, we will fail like the Apostle Peter—but we can learn from their mistakes.

The Apostle Paul was no exception, and many times the Christians thought he was stubborn. At times, he veered from the path that made sense to them. There are so many difficult verses in the Bible, and many students dispute them, reasoning they are driven against our natural instincts and our common logic. The 'difficult to explain' verses are to teach us, and the 'failures' of the Apostle Peter are to teach us. Many boast, thinking if they were in the apostle's shoes, they would have reacted differently. Our best intentions will falter—but what matters most is our attitude towards Christ.

Our Lord was resolute, even if they clashed with our natural instincts. Before Jesus left Galilee to go to Jerusalem, Luke 9:51 says: 'When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.' It meant one thing for Jesus: certain death. Similarly, in Acts 21, the Apostle Paul was resolute to go to Jerusalem. The Christians at Tyre urged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem, and he ignored their advice and headed towards Jerusalem. Two days later, at Caesarea en route to Jerusalem, he got warned again not to go, but this time by the prophet Agabus. He took Paul's belt and said, 'Paul, this is what is going to happen to you if you continue in your present course.' Of course, Paul was not discouraged. They pleaded with the Apostle Paul, arguing his precious time could be spent better, but he responded: 'I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 21:13). Here's the issue: Paul gets a clear message from his Christian brothers that he would be arrested and beaten in Jerusalem, and yet he persevered with his plans to go. Is he disobedient? After all, he is locked in jail, brutally beaten, and his fellow Christians may have sneered at him

—‘If only he had listened to me.’ If it was not for the interference of a Roman officer, he would have been stoned to death.
The Apostle Paul also adopted some Jewish practices at Jerusalem. Here is the problem: Why would Paul, knowing that the laws of Moses were obsolete, submit himself to a ‘purification’ ritual, giving many Christians the impression that Christ’s sacrifice is lacking? Many have struggled with the idea that the Apostle Paul went to the extreme to again follow the customs of the Jews, along with four other men (Acts 21:22–26). Many students study the Bible, ticking the boxes, continually weighing the options: what is right and what is wrong. They are driven by today’s code of conduct or the law, and they will readily condemn Paul.
The mere fact that Paul gets beaten up and thrown into jail does not suggest that he is acting against God’s will. Moreover, Paul’s actions eventually got him to Rome through God’s sovereign hand. He was privileged to share the Gospel with Nero (Acts 27:24). Paul had a number of spiritual gifts, and chiefly he was an apostle, but he is also known to be a prophet (Acts 13:1–2; 1 Cor. 13:2). His life is prophetic in nature, similar to Jonah in the Old Testament. His life experience, and especially of him going to Jerusalem, is to capture the truths facing the Jewish people today. Whatever we try, the complete Jewish nation will not repent, and the Apostle Paul went to the extreme to even participate in their rituals and customs at Jerusalem, thinking it would promote the Gospel. It did not change the attitude of the Jewish people, and once the seven days of Paul’s observance of the vow ended at Jerusalem, he was brutally beaten; and if it was not for the interference of the Romans, he would have been stoned to death.
The Apostle Paul’s experience speaks volumes to us, and his life does portray the Jewish nation. His efforts proved worthless, ending his mission with a two-year imprisonment to picture the character of our dispensation lasting 2,000 years. The Jewish nation will not accept Christ throughout our lifetime, but a minority will accept Him. It’s a worthless exercise to follow the Jewish rituals or the laws.
We have another ‘high and low’ in King David’s life when he sinned. The common question asked by many Christians is: how can God call David ‘a man after His own heart’ when he was such a rotten sinner, committing adultery and murder? David’s life was marked by seasons of great peace and prosperity as well as times of fear and despair. But through all his experiences, he never forgot to thank the Lord for everything he had. Late one afternoon, when he was walking on the roof of his house, he noticed a woman bathing; and she was very beautiful. It caused a series of sins and even murder. His sins were placed in the real spotlight, similar to our WikiLeaks. The ‘lows’ of King David and the Apostle Peter are prophetic in nature. Whenever we study Psalm 51, we always tend to think of ethical issues, absorbed by all the sins King David committed, and never think of Christ. I am not in the least bothered about the private life of the Clintons, and neither [am I about] King David’s. At the end of the day, King David’s life is prophetic, and the words he wrote in Psalm 51 are the words our Lord spoke with His crucifixion. He carried the world’s sin, including ours and King David’s, enabling Him to forgive us. The greatest pain He had

was carrying the load of our sins, and David tried to picture the torment He had when he wrote the Psalm. There are many ‘lows’ in the Bible, and the sad history of the Apostle Peter is written in all four Gospels and thus important. We are what we are, and our best will not suffice.
The history continues with Matthew 27, when Judas hanged himself. After Judas betrayed Jesus, he was filled with remorse, and he returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests (Matt. 27:3) ; and when the elders refused to accept the money, Judas threw the coins into the temple, left quietly, and hanged himself (27:4–5). The leading priests noticed the money and refused to place it in the temple treasury, since it was payment for murder. They had no remorse and felt comfortable buying the potter’s field (Matt. 27:7). ‘After some discussion, they finally decided to buy the potter’s field, and they made it into a cemetery for foreigners. That is why the field was called the Field of Blood. This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah that says, “They took the thirty pieces of silver—the price at which he was valued by the people of Israel—and purchased the potter’s field, as the Lord directed”’ (Matt. 27:7–10). Matthew says Judas went and hanged himself, and Luke says in the Book of Acts he fell headlong and his body burst open, spilling his intestines. He must have fallen a distance, and the rope may have snapped. There is no contradiction.
So, what happened here is that Judas went and hanged himself, and the weight of his body made him plunge down, mutilating his body.

Mark 15:1
And straightway in the morning the chief priests, having held a consultation with the elders and with the scribes and with the whole council, took Jesus away bound and delivered Him to Pilate. 2 And Pilate asked Him, ‘Art thou the King of the Jews?’ And He, answering, said unto him, ‘Thou sayest it.’ 3 And the chief priests accused Him of many things. 4 And Pilate asked Him again, saying, ‘Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things they accuse thee of.’ 5 But Jesus yet answered nothing, so that Pilate marvelled. 6 Now at that feast it was customary that he release unto them one prisoner, whomever they desired.
In the Bible, a day commences with sunrise and not at night. There are two exceptions, and they are the Sabbath and the great Day of Atonement, [which] commence on the Friday night or the night before the great Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:31). The idea of a day starting and ending at sunset is foreign to the Scriptures. Mark 16:2 says, ‘When the Sabbath ended, very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun was rising.’ How could it be ‘very early’ if the day commenced at sunset or midnight?
Early in the morning, the Sanhedrin gathered, and I don’t believe the complete council gathered, but the members who did decided to hand Him to Pilate to condemn Him to death. It says it was the ‘whole council’, but I am sure many members were missing. Their verdict was to take Him to Pilate, hoping he would execute Jesus. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea. In the Bible, Pontius Pilate is mentioned solely with regards to the trials and crucifixion of Jesus. He was reluctant to crucify

Jesus and called the charges against Jesus ‘baseless’ (Lk. 23:14) and several times declared Jesus to be not guilty: ‘What crime has this man committed? I have found in Him no grounds for the death penalty’ (Lk. 23:22). Pilate’s conscience bothered him when his wife sent him an urgent message concerning Jesus. The note begged him, ‘Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of Him’ (Matt. 27:19). John’s Gospel offers some more detail of the trial, including an additional conversation between Pilate and Jesus. John gives the real reason why they handed Jesus to Pilate.

Pilate said to them, ‘Take Him yourselves and judge Him by your own law.’ The Jews said to him, ‘It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death’ (John 18:31). The Jews were accustomed to stoning people to death, as during a tumult (Acts 7:59–60), but the Jews had no means to execute a death sentence in a normal court of law. The execution hinged on Pilate’s verdict.

He is taken to Pilate because the Jews wanted Jesus dead, and they thought it was too risky passing the judgment themselves, because of His popularity. They did not want to soil their hands, and cunningly they used the Roman law when it benefited them most.

Pilate had no interest in executing a person for any issues relating to their religion, like blasphemy; it is a Jewish matter and something he avoided. Jesus facing Pilate is not like a court hearing but an interrogation with a roaring crowd.

Pilate must have been annoyed waking up to a tumultuous crowd, and his prime question was: ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Jesus did not deny the allegation to be the ‘King of the Jews’, and neither did He endorse it. He simply said, ‘You said it.’ The reason is that at that moment His kingdom was not of this world (Jn. 18:36). He will become their Messiah and King after His resurrection. He never tried to dodge the accusations brought against Him. He remained silent, and the dignity of His silence impressed Pilate. Normally, the accused would try to defend themselves. Clearly, Pilate was reluctant to pass judgment on Jesus. He did not want the responsibility of convicting an innocent man, and he looked for an opportunity to be dragged out of this ‘decision-making.’ When he heard that Jesus was a Galilean, he thought he could wriggle his way out of this.

Pilate, as [did] Herod, came to Jerusalem on special occasions—especially during the great religious festivals, when the city was overcrowded and there was a greater risk for rebellion. Pilate faced the chief priests and the multitudes, saying: ‘I find no guilt in this man.’ Three times he repeated the ‘not guilty’ verdicts (vv. 4, 14, 22). The crowds became more restless, and Pilate didn’t know what to do next. Realising Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod, who luckily was in Jerusalem. Only Luke 23 speaks of Jesus’ trial with King Herod. If Jesus claims to be the ‘King of the Jews’, then the best option is to send Him to King Herod, who is considered to be the ‘king of the Jews’. If Jesus is a Galilean, then He ought to be tried by their jury. Herod expected at least a miracle from Jesus, like making the blind see. He never spoke a single word. Clearly, Jesus was no threat to Rome or King Herod. Ludicrous to think this when He was wounded and draped in blood. So Herod joins the scorn of the council, playing a little

politics. He'll play their little game. So he, along with his soldiers, treats Him with contempt. They mocked Him, beat Him, and blindfolded Him as previously, and they said: 'Prophesy, who hit You?' Then they dressed Him in a gorgeous robe, and in Greek 'gorgeous' is translated as brilliant, shiny, or bright. Herod humiliated Jesus by clothing Him in a highly valued garment proper for a king. At this stage, Jesus' own clothing would be torn and draped in blood. Then Herod sent Him back to Pilate. He appeared indifferent to Jesus' fate. Herod was flattered that Pilate chose to include him in the decision-making process, and Luke remarked that Herod and Pilate, who used to be enemies, became friends, finding a common enemy. It is a friendship built around a common hatred for Jesus and ultimately Jehovah Himself. History keeps repeating itself, as previously they killed all the prophets (Luke 13:34).

Pilate sent Jesus to Herod to confirm the verdict: 'I find no guilt in Him,' and neither did Herod. He wanted confirmation, and he got it. The guilt and innocence of anyone is to be confirmed in the mouth of two witnesses (Deut. 19:15). The same Luke wrote Acts 4, and he quotes Psalm 2, and part of it is written in Acts 4:26: 'The kings of the earth took their stand. The rulers were gathered against the Lord and against His Christ.' The kings of the earth, the rulers, are gathered against the Lord and against His Christ (Ps. 2:2). Acts 4:27 says: 'For truly in this city, Jerusalem, there were gathered against Thy holy servant, Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate.' That was a preliminary fulfilment. The kings and rulers gathered against Christ, was prophesied in Psalm 2, fulfilled in the trial of Jesus, and [they] did with Him whatever their heart desired. With Christ's second coming to earth, the kings and rulers will again assemble, and the outcome will be so different. From Pilate's view, going to Herod confirmed his verdict. From Christ's view, going to Herod confirmed His innocence in the mouth of two witnesses. Pilate, who sent Jesus to Herod, confirms the prophecy in Psalm 2. The trial was prompted by the Jewish people and its rulers, who wanted Jesus dead. They pursued their cause and refused to stop until they were all satisfied.

Wait, the religious leaders are not finished with Pilate; [they reconvene] another hearing with Pilate until Jesus is executed.

Mark 15:7–15

And there was one named Barabbas, who lay bound with those who had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had always done unto them. 9 And Pilate answered them, saying, 'Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?' 10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy. 11 But the chief priests moved the multitude that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. 12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, 'What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?' 13 And they cried out again, 'Crucify Him.' 14 Then Pilate said unto them, 'Why, what evil hath He done?' And they cried out the more exceedingly, 'Crucify Him. '15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

Jesus was crucified on the first day of unleavened bread, and it was Friday. The usual custom on that day seems to [be to] release a prisoner to appease the crowds. According to the Gospels, it was customary for the Romans to release a Jewish prisoner during the Passover festival. Pilate tried to use this custom as an excuse to release Jesus. The crowd in the courtyard demanded the release of Barabbas. Eventually, Pilate succumbed to the pressure, releasing him.

Each of the Gospel writers does mention Barabbas, thus something significant is tied to his release. Matthew 27:16 calls him a ‘notorious prisoner’.

Mark and Luke 23:19 say he was in prison for insurrection and murder. John 19:40 adds that he had taken part in a rebellion.

The Apostle Peter called him a murderer (Acts 3:14). Nothing more is known of him, nor of the insurrection in which he took part. I don’t think he was a political prisoner, as Pilate would not free a man who had raised a revolt against the Roman power. The Jews would not be interested in the release of a robber. The crowds were led by the Sanhedrin [and] paid mercenaries. Their henchmen would have roamed in the courtyard, and probably composed a significant part of the gathering. Remember, Mark 14:43 says a multitude of people accompanied Judas with swords and staves from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Jesus was arrested late at night and brought before Pilate early the next morning, and most of His followers probably didn’t know where He was or what was happening to Him. His disciples were hiding out of fear of arrest.

Thus, the Jewish leaders could have told their servants and henchmen to shout for Barabbas to be released, and the rest of the crowd could have then joined in. Mark 15:11 supports this, saying the ‘chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. ’

But why did the Jewish leaders want Jesus to die instead of Barabbas? The answer is that many of the common people believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and He threatened the authority the religious leaders had over the common people.

When Jesus raised Lazarus, the Jewish leaders’ hatred towards Jesus intensified, and no one questioned the miracle itself. Jesus had done many signs that proved His divine origin. The problem became partly political. How could they manage this ‘new cult’ as the crowds would submit themselves to Him and not the Sanhedrin, who were respected by the people?

Caiaphas reasoned that by killing Jesus, they could keep the peace. ‘Better one man die than the whole nation perish’ (Jn. 11:50). The needs of the many outweighed the needs of the few. Caiaphas reasoned that by having Jesus murdered, he could maintain the peace to ensure his financial gains. The Jewish leaders felt threatened, possibly losing their grip over the people; thus, they planned to kill Jesus, but it cost them dearly. What they feared most happened anyway when the Roman army burned Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. It turns out Caiaphas was right, but not in the way he thought.

Through Jesus's death, Christ brought salvation not only to Israel but to the whole world, and the release of Barabbas pictures this beautifully. It reminds me of the history of Mordecai and Haman in the Book of Esther. Haman was a true hater of the Jews, and he was entranced with the idea to annihilate Mordecai and the Jewish people. Via the intervention of Mordecai, Esther, and King Ahasuerus, Haman was summarily put to death on the very gallows he erected for Mordecai. Don't be mistaken: our Lord was crucified, and He resembled Judah, as Judas represented Judah. The Jewish nation were figuratively crucified by the Roman Empire in 70 AD, and Barabbas or the lost tribes of Israel are blessed and set free. Let me explain.

The political backdrop

Pilate knew the Sanhedrin were envious of Jesus, and their careers hung in the balance. Jesus was well known, and His fame reached the courts of Rome. Many thought He would be the Messiah, and Pilate's main objective was to maintain peace at Jerusalem, especially during their festivals. The Romans ruled the people by the sword, and they were not as cultured as the Babylonians or the Medo-Persians.

There was a real power struggle between Pilate and the Sanhedrin, who were then the supreme council of the Jewish people. They represented the voice of the people.

Pilate was concerned, and he knew the gravity of this trial. He had a valid reason to ask: 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He knew this trial spelled a possible international conflict, especially with their neighbours. He had to be concerned.

Bordering the Roman Empire was the Parthian Empire, and they were a formidable nation. Most Bible students are totally unfamiliar with the ancient Parthian Empire, who ruled east of the Euphrates River, while at the same time the Roman Empire ruled over the Mediterranean region. Even though Rome launched many wars of aggression against Parthia, none of them conquered the Parthians. In fact, in the year 1 AD, the Roman Empire made a treaty with them to ensure peace, especially about the time when Jesus was born. Think about it—the wise men from the east (Parthia) bringing gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:11). They fell down on their faces to worship a newborn baby named Jesus. They gave Him the same civil honour and respect as they would have shown to their own kings and princes. These two ancient 'superpowers' opposed and respected each other for centuries, and they did not want to entice a war.

A famous nineteenth-century historian, George Rawlinson, wrote an extensive documentary on the history of the Parthian Empire. It's entitled: 'The Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy'. Steven M. Collins wrote a book 'Parthia'. They were civilised people, and their power was so great that they devastated the Assyrian Empire and twice defeated the Persian Empire. Yet we read or hear almost nothing about them. They were familiar with the tribes of Scythia, lying north of them, and in times of trouble, the Parthians and Scythians were natural allies.

The ten lost tribes of Israel were exiled into Asia by the Assyrians, and after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, the Medes and the Persians ruled

them. The Parthians are fellow tribesmen to the Sacae Scythians, who bore the name of Isaac. The Parthians used a Semitic alphabet, which clearly indicates that their native language and racial origin were Semitic! The inscriptions on the great rock carving at Behistun in northern Iran are written in three languages: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian. The people who are called ‘SAKKA’ in Persian are called ‘GIMIRI’ in Babylonian, thus proving they belong to Israel. The Israelites did call themselves the House of Isaac or ISAAKA. The basic root of ISAAK, SAKKA, SKUTHAI, ISKUZAI, and SCYTHIAN is SK in each case.

Hosea 1:6–10 says the Israelites will be too numerous to count after He sent them into captivity. The Jewish historian Josephus confirmed that it happened by the first century AD. I wrote on this in [my commentary on] Mark 10:46–52. Josephus said they were too numerous to estimate, and they were split into their principal tribes. Some parts of the Bible record genealogies of the tribes of Israel, and Numbers 26:35–36 records them. I don’t want to detail this.

God had promised that the tribe of Judah would produce kings and rulers (Gen. 49:10), and King David was promised that he would always have descendants ruling over the House of Israel (Jer. 33:17). Jeremiah’s prophecy was made after the relocation of the House of Israel. Therefore, because of the timing of Jeremiah’s prophecy, we should expect to find descendants of King David ruling over the ten tribes of Israel after they moved to Asia. The wise men from the east were familiar with that truth. They were from the east and surely expected the Messiah, and more than likely they were from Parthia. They looked for the King of the Jews and went to Jerusalem. They followed the wrong route, and they were redirected by means of a star to Bethlehem. They were directed by a star —and a star always portrays the hidden things. They had gold (kingship), frankincense (priesthood), and myrrh.

Both empires respected the peace treaty, and they wanted no war—and deep inside, Pilate knew Jesus was a king, and He was hailed by the Parthians. He was no ordinary man from the street, and his wife too alerted him.

Pilate tried his best to make Jesus talk, and quietly he must have whispered to Him: ‘Please say something—I want to clear you and set you free. ’

Indeed, Pilate was cautious but later succumbed to the pressure, and it cost him dearly. Why did Pilate give in to the pressure even though he believed that Jesus was innocent? The Sanhedrin pushed for quick action in order to allow less time for the followers of Jesus to organise a possible revolt in His support. Most of the people in Jerusalem didn’t even know that Jesus was in custody, because He had been arrested very late the previous night. Pilate didn’t want to give a death sentence and repeatedly tried to find ways to avoid it. John 19:1–16 says that Pilate continued to look for a way to save Jesus but finally gave up when the Jewish leaders threatened to report him to the emperor for not enforcing the laws against rebellion. Even then, according to Matthew 27:24, he washed his hands in front of the crowd in an effort to disassociate himself from any responsibility. He knew if he crucified Jesus, he might incite the crowds

and even the Parthian people to stir a possible war. It made him feel very uncomfortable.

Barabbas is an Aramaic word and can be literally translated as ‘the son of the father’. Of all the Semitic languages, Aramaic is the closest related to Hebrew. During the Babylonian exile, Aramaic became the language spoken by the Jews. It is rather perplexing why he is known as ‘the son of the father’. We have no other history, and some think he is ‘the son of the devil’ or the antichrist. If we claim him to be ‘the son of the devil’, then in the same breath we can ask: since when was Satan imprisoned to be freed? It makes no sense.

We have no idea who Barabbas is, and we are left with mere symbolism. Can Barabbas be ‘the son of the law’? No; after Barabbas was released, the Jewish nation was burdened even more by the law, a yoke too heavy to bear (Acts 15:10). In a parable, they were burdened seven times heavier since Christ’s crucifixion.

‘When an unclean spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, seeking rest but finding none. Then it says, “I will return to the person I came from.” So it returns and finds its former home empty, swept, and in order. Then the spirit finds seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before. That will be the experience of this evil generation’ (Lk. 11:24–26).

The unclean spirit is a demon belonging to Satan, and Jesus mentioned this parable when the religious leaders snubbed Him. He likens the unbelieving evil generation or the Jewish people who rejected the risen Christ to the demon-possessed man who cleaned his house. He had the opportunity to accept Jesus’s message, noticing His miracles, but he did not repent to invite Him into his house. He merely used the opportunity to clean and redecorate his house. Refusing Christ, they were left with an empty and deserted house. The ‘demon’ did return, and the problems they had increased sevenfold. Satan was not freed, but he made their laws even more burdensome. We have a choice: to either fill our lives with the Word of God or invite Satan. The letter or the law kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6).

At this critical moment, did God forsake the house of Israel? There are so many promises made in the Bible regarding the lost tribes of Israel, especially Jeremiah 24:7, 30:22, 31:33, and 32:38, when God assures Israel they will always be His people, and He will always be their God, even today! To me, Barabbas could be the true ‘son of the Father’ or God Himself and not the devil. The son is the prodigal son who left his home, repented, and returned to his father. Why do we always look for the bad, failing to notice the good developing from this exchange?

Many Bible students argue that the promises made by God in Jeremiah await future fulfilment. No—they are in the making now, and in no way is there a ‘pause’ in God’s promises. Barabbas pictures the ten lost tribes of Israel who were lost and forsaken but freed today.

The lost sheep of Israel were taken captive and were exiled to Assyria and to countries further east in the year 722 BC. Since then, they have been known as the ten lost tribes of Israel, coming from Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, and Joseph (Manasseh and

Ephraim). Another name God uses to call them in the Bible is ‘Ephraim’ or ‘the house of Joseph’, as they were, or would be, the largest tribe among them. Today, they are deemed as lost both physically and spiritually, reasoning they have forgotten their ethnic and spiritual identity. Jacob, the father of Israel, prophesied that Ephraim would become a multitude of nations (Gen. 48:17–19). They will develop as a nation to be likened to ‘the sand of the sea’, and it is quoted many times in the Bible (Gen. 32:12; 41:49; Isa. 10:20; Hos. 1:10; Rom. 9:27). God is not idle regarding His promises, and He mentioned many times that He will regather them and bring them home, and He meant it. There are hundreds of millions descending from the house of Israel, unaware that they are the sons and daughters of Jacob/Israel. They are deemed as the Gentiles, living among the pagans, worshipping the pagan gods. Regathering them seems like an impossible task. The Good News is that they are gathered today, disguised as the Church. Unknowingly, all the blessings that are bestowed on us today are the firstborn blessings God made to Ephraim in the Book of Genesis.

Jesus once said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (Matt. 15:24). He came to find the lost sheep of Israel and to redeem them. Jesus our Messiah came down to earth to find and redeem them, and we need to understand ‘how’ and ‘when’ He did accomplish it. The truth is that Jesus was sent to find the people that were already His and redeem them, because of the Covenant and the promises He repeatedly declared by the prophets in the Old Testament. It was His sole mission, and the release of Barabbas does picture the release of the ten lost tribes of Israel at the expense of Jesus—who portrayed the two tribes of Israel. The crowds chanting ‘Crucify [Him]’ proved disastrous. The Jewish nation used to be God’s people but then became ‘not God’s people’, and Barabbas, who used to be a prisoner (the ten lost tribes of Israel), is set free, never to be belittled again [as] known to be ‘not My people’. With the release of Barabbas, they became ‘His people’ or Ammi. The release of Barabbas has great implications.

Jesus did not come for strangers, and He was sent to ‘regather’ His people. When God said His Son would be the ‘light to the Gentiles and to the world’ (Isa. 42:6; 49:6), He really meant His lost sheep. He came for His people who were ‘lost’ in all possible ways, both physically and spiritually. It was His top priority, and the release of Barabbas does picture the true nature of His mission. Samaria was the first place He went, and the first place He felt comfortable enough to reveal His true identity, acknowledging Himself as the true Messiah to the Samaritan woman. He was hesitant to openly announce this truth in Judea. Without the lost ten tribes, Israel is not complete. The Messiah first revealed His true identity to the lost sheep of Israel who were known as the Samaritans or the Gentiles. He would remain with them for 2,000 years and harvest a great multitude of souls from amongst the lost sheep. The two days He remained at Samaria is equated to the 2,000 years of our dispensation. Openly, the Jews rejected Jesus and sold Him to the Gentiles, shouting, ‘Away with Him.’ Barabbas was set free, and God turned the confusion to

His glory—to create an opportunity for Barabbas to be set free from the pagan world. All was planned from the beginning.
Isaiah 42:7 says that Jesus will open the eyes of the blind. He will free the captives from prison, releasing the people who sit in dark dungeons. He will say to the prisoners, ‘Come out in freedom,’ and to those in darkness, ‘Come into the light.’ They will be My sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare (Isaiah 49:9).
Most Christians think this passage is fulfilled when Jesus healed the blind and the disciples escaped from prison, but that is the superficial fulfilment. There is a far greater connotation, even when the blind were made to see.
Soon after Christ's resurrection, the Sanhedrin or the high priest arrested the apostles to make a public show of them and send them to prison (Acts 5). At night, an angel from the Lord opened the prison doors and led them out. The angel told them to go, take their place in the temple, and tell the people everything about the Gospel. Acts 16:25 has a similar setting, when the prison doors opened after a violent earthquake shook the prison’s foundations. The doors flew open, and everyone’s chains fell off. Paul and Silas were singing praises when the ground started to move. God shook the earth, and their chains fell to the ground. They could have escaped, but they had the amazing privilege of explaining to the jailer how to be saved. They were freed, like Barabbas. The lost tribes of Israel were scattered over vast areas of Asia, and when they were threatened by war, they were given the opportunity to migrate to greener pastures, to Europe and many countries. Early in the Church's history, the ten lost tribes of Israel were forced to migrate in hordes, known as the greatest migration ever, spanning many centuries. They could not migrate to the east, south, or west to buffer the Roman Empire. They headed north and then west to Europe.
Ever since Barabbas was set free, we hear nothing from him, and similarly, the history of the lost tribes is unknown. Do not be mistaken: in our dispensation, God is working amongst them, and the Old Testament has many prophecies that concern them. Even after they were deported to Assyria, Hosea spoke of them, saying they are ‘not God’s people’ due to their sins. That is not the end of their ordeal.
God told Hosea to do something strange: to marry Gomer. He cautioned him and said she would be unfaithful to him, known as a prostitute. The children from that marriage are called Lo-Ammi—‘not My people’—and Lo-Ruhamah, ‘not pitied.’ We also learn that God will divorce His wife, Israel. Hosea’s audience were the northern tribes of Israel, and he distinguishes between the children of Israel (the northern kingdom) and the children of Judah. For example, in Hosea 1:11, we read, ‘Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together…’ Clearly, in Hosea, Israel are the ‘lost sheep’ or the ten lost tribes of Israel. With the Assyrian captivity in 722 BC, the ten tribes of Israel became Lo-Ammi, and not Judah. God divorced Israel, and she became ‘not My people.’ Leviticus 26 is clear, saying if Israel disobeys God, He will punish them—but temporarily. Because Israel disobeyed the law, they were punished with the exact punishments God had warned them of in Leviticus 26. Gomer

did forsake Hosea, and he had to purchase her a second time. ‘Bring her back to you and love her, even though she loves adultery.’ The Lord still loves Israel, even though the people turned to other gods, offering them choice gifts. So I bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and about five bushels of barley and a measure of wine (Hosea 3:1–2). Most commentators agree that Hosea did procure his previously estranged wife Gomer, and the payment is the redemption price that came via Christ’s death and resurrection. We are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). Before our Lord was crucified, the Jewish nation was known as Ammi or God’s people, and they had the responsibility to share the Word of God. However, things did change, and since Christ’s resurrection, their roles were swapped, with the result that the ‘lost sheep,’ who used to be known as Lo-Ammi, became Ammi, and what used to be Ammi became Lo-Ammi.
Ezekiel 23 is about two sisters. We read in verse 4 that the one sister (Oholah) represents Samaria, the capital of the ten tribes, and her sister (Oholibah) represents Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom or Judah.
Verses 5–10 describe the sins of Samaria.
Verses 12–18 describe Jerusalem’s sins.
Verse 18 tells us that God’s mind was the same towards Jerusalem as it was towards Samaria.
Verse 31 says Jerusalem walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand. The punishment once measured by God to Israel will be appraised for Judah and Jerusalem.
Verses 32 and 33 reiterate this.
Therefore, if the northern kingdom was made Lo-Ammi because of their disobedience,
God will deal similarly with the Jewish nation.

The firstborn right of Israel is invested in the ten lost tribes and not Judah. The fall of the Jewish people is to benefit the Gentile nations or Barabbas, who was released from prison. Romans 11:11 is clear, maintaining that the lost tribes of Israel did not stumble and fall beyond recovery. Indeed, they were rebellious, but God enabled them to partake in His greatest salvation plan. God’s intent is to make the Jewish people envious, to spur them to claim the blessings and to share in the firstborn rights of the Church.

Mark 15:16–21
And the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple and plaited a crown of thorns and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they smote Him on the head with a reed and spat upon Him and, bowing their knees, worshipped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him and put His own clothes on Him and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country—the father of Alexander and Rufus—to bear His cross.

They clothed Him in purple. Matthew 27:28 calls it a ‘scarlet’ robe. It was more scarlet than purple. The kings used to wear it, and on this occasion, they used it in mockery of Him being the ‘so-called’ King. On earth, He never claimed to be King on earth, but the people thought He would be their king. The colour purple portrays the ‘Christ’ who reconciles us to God. The colour red depicts the earth, and heaven by the colour blue. The mediator between heaven and earth is Christ (purple). Red mixed with blue is purple.

They placed a crown of thorns on His head.

In the Book of Judges, chapter 8, we find the first parable in the Bible, with reference to a thorn tree who ruled the people of Israel. Abimelech killed the sons of Gideon and declared himself to be the king of Israel. Luckily, one of Gideon’s sons named Jotham escaped, and he recited the parable of the fig, olive, vine, and thorn tree. Abimelech is the thorn tree that epitomises the law with thorns and thistles.

‘And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed’ (Exodus 3:2–4). The thorn tree or the dispensation of the law commenced with the burning thorn tree and it ended when they placed a crown of thorns on His head. Both the law and sin go hand in hand, and the more we sin, the more laws we need to create. That is how Jesus’ life ended, but He brought an end to the curse of the law. The law can create nothing better than thorns.

Matthew 27:29 says they placed a reed stick in His right hand as a sceptre. Then they knelt before Him in mockery and taunted Him, ‘Hail! King of the Jews!’ A reed can be translated as ‘a sceptre’ (Hebrews 1:8). It symbolises procreation and fertility (Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17). Kings commonly carried a sceptre as a sign of their office or rank (Esther 4:11). The ‘reed’ or ‘staff’ they put in His hand, in imitation of a sceptre, was to mock Him as King. The Jewish nation cannot trust any nation on earth, as Egypt could not be relied upon. The Assyrians did mock the Jewish people, thinking they would succumb to them as the northern tribes did to the Assyrian people. They said:

‘Now, look! When you trust Egypt, you’re trusting a broken stick for a staff. If you lean on it, it stabs your hand and goes through it. This is what Pharaoh is like for everyone who trusts him’ (2 Kings 18:21).

They thought the Jewish people would rely on Egypt, but they did rely on God. Isaiah says the Lord slew 185,000 men belonging to the Assyrian army. We are told, ‘When men [of the Jewish people] arose early in the morning, behold, there were all dead bodies’ (Isaiah 37:36). Similarly, during Jesus’ time, they mocked the sceptre, but the iron sceptre will judge them (Psalm 2:9). Carrying our cross is a familiar concept, and Simon from Cyrene was the first to carry Jesus’ cross. Cyrene is located in North Africa and is part of Libya, having a Jewish community. Simon was possibly a Jew coming to Jerusalem for Passover. Earlier, in Acts 2:10, we are told that there were Cyrenians in the crowd who heard Peter speaking on the day of Pentecost. Later, in Acts 11:20, we hear of Cyrenians preaching to the Greek Gentiles. Another Cyrenian is mentioned as being in the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1). They were active in the

evangelisation. Simon of Cyrene was a ‘passer-by’ when the Romans seized him and made him carry Jesus’ cross. We know from John’s Gospel that Jesus initially bore His own cross (John 19:17), but the soldiers feared that Jesus would not be able to make it to Golgotha. After this event, we hear nothing from Simon. Note that two of Simon’s children, Alexander and Rufus, are cited by Mark. It seems that the impact of the event impressed his two sons, to become prominent Christians. Possibly he could be the Rufus mentioned in Romans 16:13 by the Apostle. North Africa was one of the largest exporters of grain in the Roman Empire, and not as ‘dry’ as today.

Simon is the first person to bear the cross, and there are many Simons in the Bible, and they are usually the ‘first’, as with Simon Peter and Simeon who saw baby Jesus before he died. Christ’s redemptive message was readily accepted by the tribe of Simeon. The national colour of Simeon is green, the national colour of Ireland, and along with white and red, forms the background of the Welsh flag.

Whatever happened on the day of Jesus’s crucifixion, the tide could not be stopped, as if it was planned by God. All the Scriptures leading to Christ’s death and resurrection were fulfilled, and even the great promises God made to Israel. They are not side-lined, and we are part of God’s redemption plan. We cannot blame the people and Pilate, who did his best to make Jesus speak, to gather some evidence to set Him free—but in the end, the Gentile nations and the Jews colluded together. His Kingdom is hidden, and it went from the Jewish nation to the lost tribes, the people He spent most of His time with. What matters today is our attitude to the resurrected Christ. Our old ‘self’ is condemned and crucified, and we wouldn’t have done any better than Judas, Pilate, the members of the Sanhedrin, or the accusing crowds. We cannot condemn them, but we can learn from their mistakes and greed.

Mark 15:22–24

And they brought Him to the place of Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh, but He received it not. And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

Golgotha is an Aramaic word for the location where Jesus was crucified, outside Jerusalem’s walls. John 19:16–18 says: ‘So they took Jesus, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called “The Place of a Skull”, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.’ In Luke 23:33, the word Calvary is used in reference to the same location. According to early church fathers, the location was called ‘The Place of the Skull’ due to the shape of the hill, resembling a human skull. The Latin word for skull is ‘cranium’, and it comes from the Greek root ‘kranion’. The Hebrew word Golgotha is ‘gulgolet’, which simply means ‘skull’, in reference to each person, as if counting the ‘heads’ in a classroom. The word appears in Numbers 1:2, 18, 20, 22; 3:47 and twice in Exodus 16:16; 38:26, when the manna was gathered for each family member, and when they calculated the ‘head’ tax or the ‘redemption’ money for each firstborn.

The Hebrew name Golgotha comes from the same root as Gilgal, and Israel's history is entrenched with that word, especially the time when Israel entered the Land of Canaan. As a nation, their first 'stop-over' in the Land of Canaan was Gilgal. Their crossing the River Jordan and entering the Land of Canaan pictures their rebirth. Somehow, that part of Israel's history is tied to Jesus' crucifixion.

Israel had to wake up very early in the morning, and they had to follow a route from Shittim to Gilgal, crossing the River Jordan, to portray their death and resurrection in Christ. Once they crossed the river, they entered the promises of the new covenant. The prophet Micah once spoke to Israel to recall their past history, to return to their roots—to memorise the route from Shittim to Gilgal.

'Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, so that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord' (Micah 6:5). It is the way from the darkness to the promises of the new covenant. In the Hebrew language, Gilgal literally means 'wheel', and the verb means 'to roll'. It is the closest word in the Old Testament that denotes our common word 'rebirth'. The import of the word is captured in Joshua 5:9: 'Today I have rolled away the reproach of Israel.' The occult is not familiar with the expression 'rebirth' and rather speaks of reincarnation. To them, the word means 'to be made flesh again', and they liken it to a spinning wheel. They are caught in the wheel of reincarnation. Satan purposely tries to relegate the real meaning of rebirth, and Nicodemus approached Jesus at night to clear his mind (John 3).

At Gilgal, twelve stones were erected as a monument to signify Israel's rebirth, leaving Shittim to enter the promised rest. Shittim (Strong's no. 7851) is a harsh word, translated from the same root word as Satan (Strong's no. 7853), and our Lord led the world from a dark, dark world of sin to His light. Out of interest, Gilgal seems to be understood as Galilee; as Gilgal and Galil are of the same root and etymology. I believe today the monument that used to be at Gilgal is valued by the ten lost tribes of Israel, who used to live in Galilee.

In Old Testament times, outside the camp was where everything unclean went. Hebrews 13:12 says that Jesus Christ suffered outside the gate. Why was Jesus Christ among those who suffered and died outside the camp; He had done nothing wrong? The reason is that Jesus did not die as a private person. He died as a substitute, bearing the load of our sins. All our sins were imputed to Him, as He was legally charged with them. Just as the sacrificial bull was burned outside the camp for a sin offering, Jesus Christ suffered and died outside the camp as a sin offering for His people.

With this in mind, we as God's people must 'go to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach' (Hebrews 13:13). Part of our oneness with Christ is to suffer with Him. 'And if children, also heirs—truly heirs of God, and joint-heirs of Christ—if indeed we suffer together, that we may also be glorified together' (Romans 8:17). A prerequisite to be glorified together with Christ is to suffer with Him. It is not an option. It is not something we as believers can skip, thinking we are guaranteed to be glorified with Christ in heaven. If there is no suffering, then it shows no oneness with Christ. If Christ suffered, and we are one with Christ, then we too suffer

together with Him. Our suffering is evidence that we are co-heirs with Christ.

The Cross as a Christian Symbol?

The cross is recognised as one of the most important symbols of the Roman Catholic Church. It is displayed on the tops of the roofs and towers of their churches. Should we parade the cross, an instrument of His death, before the world and be proud of it? Do the scriptures anywhere teach that we are to take the cross and place it upon our buildings or wear it around our necks? As someone recently said—if your mother died of a gunshot wound, would you adorn your neck with a figurine-like figure of a gun? The early Christians did not consider the cross a virtuous symbol, but rather as ‘the accursed tree’, a device of death and ‘shame’ (Hebrews 12:2). Their faith is based on what the cross accomplished: their complete forgiveness of sin! In this sense, the apostles preached about the cross and gloried in it (1 Corinthians 1:17–18). When they spoke of the cross, they were speaking of the suffering of Calvary, the mental torture He endured. In the 6th century, the crucifix image was introduced and worshipped by the churches.

We need not be too concerned about the exact shape of the cross upon which Jesus hung. It is not detailed in the Scriptures. The shape of the cross is trivial. What matters is the ‘One’ who hung there and what He accomplished via His death. Constantine, the famous Roman Emperor, had an apparent vision of the cross and experienced a fake ‘conversion’ to fool many Christians. Indeed, it was a major turning point in our Christian history. I believe it was politically motivated to lull and fool the Christians. In the year 314 AD, the cross appeared on Constantine’s coins. His banner was a cross, and he approved many murders and even executed his own family members.

Twice Jesus was offered wine while on the cross. He refused the first, but why did He accept the second offer? He refused the wine mixed with myrrh, and the possible reason is that Jesus did not want to dull the pain. He planned to be conscious, to endure the cross with an alert mind. According to traditions, respected women of Jerusalem provided a narcotic drink to the people—those who were condemned to die. He experienced the physical pain, but the real pain was the spiritual anguish of carrying our load of sin.

The second time, wine or sour vinegar was offered to Him, when some bystanders thought He was calling for Elijah. Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to Him to drink, saying, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down. ’

What amazes me is that very few words are spoken about Jesus’ crucifixion in the Bible, and the verses that do mention the crucifixion seem to be more absorbed with His clothing than with how they crucified our Lord. It is so obvious when we study the following verses in the Gospels.

‘And they crucified Him and divided His garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take’ (Mark 15:24). ‘When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided His garments into four parts, one

for each soldier, with the tunic remaining. It was seamless, woven in one piece from the top to the bottom' (John 19:23). 'When they had crucified Him, they divided up His clothes by casting lots' (Matthew 27:35). 'When they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals, one on His right and the other on His left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide His garments' (Luke 23:33–34).

This may come as a surprise to many. The precise shape of the object on which Jesus was crucified cannot be proved explicitly from the Bible. The Greek word is 'stauros', and it is translated as a 'cross', meaning 'a pole or a cross used as an instrument of capital punishment'. It is like the pole and the cross beam tied together. The Greek word 'stauroo', which is translated 'crucify', means 'to be attached to a pole or cross'. Outside of the Bible, the same verb was also used in the context of erecting a fence with cross beams. Though 'stauros' can mean either 'pole' or 'stake', many scholars argue that Jesus most likely died on a cross in which the upright beam projected above the shorter cross piece.

The only verse to actually confirm Jesus was nailed to the cross is Psalm 22:16, reading: 'Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me; they have pierced my hands and my feet.' The phrase 'pierced my hands and feet', along with the context, is likely the clearest prophecy of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Scriptures. Some Bible versions translate the verse as: 'Like a lion, they are at my hands and feet.' What causes the confusion is that the two Hebrew words for 'pierced' and 'lion' are remarkably similar. All that separates the two Hebrew words is the length of an upright vowel stroke. When we study the context of Psalm 22, then it is Jesus' death at Calvary, and the critics will love to denounce it.

After the rapture, on the day of the Lord, the Jewish nation will accept Christ when they call on the name Jehovah. They will stumble upon King David: they will be frightened and curious, asking, 'What are the wounds in Your hands and feet?' (Zechariah 13:6). That clears my mind, confirming that they did pierce our Lord's hands and feet. The actual crucifixion of Jesus is spoken of with the least words, as if it is overlooked, but not His resurrection. How it happened is not detailed, and I believe the spiritual suffering He endured caused the real pain. The children of Israel had the knowledge of the law and the prophets, trained from their earliest years to look for the Messiah and to expect a mighty 'prophet like unto Moses' (Deuteronomy 18:15). They experienced the miracles He did, but to reject Him with this demeaning arrogance is painful! The door of life is wide open, but they refused to enter in.

The cross as we know it today is translated as a wood or tree (Strong's no. G3586). 'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree' (Galatians 3:13). 'The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree' (Acts 5:30). 'And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree' (Acts 10:39). 'And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre' (Acts 13:29).

‘[And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre]’ (1 Peter 2:24).
Whenever the subject of Jesus’ sufferings is raised—the pain and frustrations He endured—we will find they are spiritual in nature. He did not only carry our load of sin on the cross, but He carried them throughout His life, from His birth. When God looked on Him, when He prayed in the mountains, God noticed the sins He carried for us, and that was the most painful of all. God is righteous, and the penalty of sin is dealt with. The guilt and the pain King David experienced when he sinned, as written in Psalm 51, is the guilt and the pain our Lord experienced throughout His life.
When Jesus died on the cross, four Roman soldiers were gambling for His garment. They divided Jesus’ clothes. It is very frustrating to most Bible students, eager to know how Jesus was crucified, and they are the least interested in Jesus’ clothing. Dividing Jesus’ clothes was one of their perks, a reward to those who crucified Him. Many chapters in the Bible speak of the clothing of the high priest, and the idea of mentioning them is to refresh our memories and to study the Old Testament.
Evidently, there were at least two garments Jesus wore, and we are told that they took His garments and divided them into four parts. Each of the four got a portion. Now the great reward is the seamless robe, woven into one piece from the top to the bottom, and it was valued. Splitting the garment into four pieces would be senseless, so they gambled for the reward. Psalm 22:18 predicted they would cast lots for the garment.
Besides the precious garment, Jesus had other clothes, enough to make four bundles to be divided amongst them. Perhaps Jesus had sandals, a headpiece, an outer robe, a belt, and underwear or breeches, as in the Book of Leviticus 6:10. I am sure He wore them, and He was not hanging naked in view of everyone.
Our Lord was a traveller and never settled in one place. He must have had a suitcase filled with clothes. I believe all His clothes were bundled together to be shared, but they gambled for the seamless garment.
The detail must be applied spiritually, as His crucifixion is overshadowed by the sharing of the clothes. When the Romans took the clothes and garment—they meant more than its physical worth. The duties of the High Priest were portrayed with the seven pieces of clothing he wore, and each of them spelled a message. Similarly, the glory Jesus had is accepted by the Gentile nations, and they treasured His garment. The clothes did not remain at Jerusalem but went to the four corners of the world, where Christ’s message is accepted. Jesus’ clothes are the glorified and risen Christ, and Simeon prophesied this at Jesus’ birth, shortly before he died. He was pleased, perceiving the salvation which is prepared for all people to see. He is a light to the nations and brings glory to His people Israel (Luke 2:29–32). Indeed, the glory of our Lord did reach the four corners of the earth, and wherever the Gospel is accepted, there we will find His garment, portraying His glory.
The high priest in the Old Testament used to wear a robe: ‘There is to be an opening in its top in the centre of it, with an edge all around the

opening, the work of a weaver, like the opening of a collar, so that it cannot be torn' (Exodus 28:32).

- The hole was large enough to allow the priest's head to penetrate it.
- There had to be a binding (hem) around the hole. The word 'hole' stems from the Hebrew word 'peh' (Strong's no. 6310), which is usually translated as 'mouth' or 'commandments'.
- The word 'top' or 'head' (as used in some translations) stems from the Hebrew word 'rosh' (Strong's no. 7218), which is almost always translated as 'head, chief', or 'start'.
- The word 'binding' stems from the Hebrew word 'saphah' (Strong's no. 8193), which is usually translated as 'lip'.

The garment symbolises Christ as our High Priest, who reconciles us to God.

Many aspects concerning Jesus' crucifixion are portrayed in the history of King David, who experienced many setbacks and joys. When he became king, the Philistines had the ark, and he wanted to return it to Jerusalem. He designed a special wagon, and on this occasion, the ark was transported on new wheels. The wheels can be translated as 'Gilgal', and a rolling wheel suggests rebirth. Usually, the Levites had to carry the ark, but not on this occasion. The ark that used to be carried reflects the old covenant, for it was too burdensome to carry (Acts 15:10), but the wheels that carried the ark convey the new covenant. Something did go wrong, and unexpectedly the ark stumbled and remained with the Gentiles. It is like Jesus' garment, to be claimed by the Gentiles. The ark nearly fell to the ground to picture Israel, who stumbled under the weight of the old covenant. Uzzah (one of the people who helped to steer the wagon) lost his life because he touched the ark. The moment when Uzzah died can be equated to the time when the Jews rejected their Messiah. Yet it has a positive outcome for the Church, as they are established (Romans 11:12). Everything seemed good to David, but it ended on a sour note. The kingdom that was promised to Israel was deferred, as they did not receive the Lord to govern them. The ark remained for three months at Obed-Edom, to reflect our present dispensation. There was an interruption, and in the interim, the Church is blessed. Uzzah's death does not convey the Lord Jesus' death, but rather it epitomises the rejection of their Messiah. Due to the Jews who rejected their rightful King, Obed-Edom (Gentile nations) is blessed immensely. 'The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household' (2 Samuel 6:11).

After this interruption (our dispensation), Israel will again be joyful, and that is when David wore the ephod to escort the ark to Jerusalem with no mishaps. It will literally be on the 'Day of the Lord' when Christ will return to Israel as both their King and High Priest. There was great joy. 'Then David danced before the Lord with all his might, and David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and the sound of the trumpet' (2 Samuel 6:14–15).

I am not surprised to find a frequently occurring ratio of 1 to 4 with Jesus' crucifixion. The 'One' portrays the top of the pyramid (seamless garment), and the 4, the foundations or the four bundles of clothes. The one binds

the four, as a cross with its four corners is kept together by the ‘One’ hanging on it. He is the seamless garment, unable to tear.
In Genesis 2, we frequently find the ratio 4:1. The numerical value of ‘the tree of life’ is 233, and the value of ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ is 932. Thus, it is 4 × 233 = 932, or 1(233) to 4(932). In the Hebrew, the word ‘mist’ (water) is אֵד, and the numerical value is 1:4. A river flowed through the Garden of Eden to irrigate the garden. The river is not named, but it branched into four tributaries.
Twice Joseph lost his garment. Once, when his brothers threw him in a pit, to picture Jesus’ death and resurrection. The second time is when Potiphar’s wife enticed him. When Joseph refused her, she caught Him by the coat, and he ran away, never to return again. It is similar to our Lord Jesus, who went to Jerusalem to seek and to save those who were lost. Our Lord left the Jewish people, and there is no intimacy between them, and the people who now have His coat, like Potiphar’s wife, are blessed. Symbolically, Potiphar’s woman portrays the Jewish people and Israel, who were married to God as in Ezekiel 16. They are blessed by the garment, and surely today both the Western nations and the Jewish nation are blessed financially.

Mark 15:25–32
And it was the third hour when they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written over: THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with Him they crucified two thieves: the one on His right hand and the other on His left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which says, ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’ And those that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘Ah, thou that would destroy the temple of God and build it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross.’ Likewise also the princes of the priests, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, King of Israel, descend now from the stake that we may see and believe.’ And those that were crucified with Him reviled Him.
At What Hour Was Jesus Crucified?
Mark 15:25 says it was the third hour, and John said Jesus stood before Pilate on the sixth hour (John 19:14–15). More than likely, John was using the Roman measurement of time when dealing with the crucifixion. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for the most part, used the Hebrew system of measuring a day, from sunrise to sunrise. The Roman system was from midnight to midnight. John wrote his Gospel in a Roman province of Asia, and therefore employed the Roman reckoning of time.
The third hour is about 9 o’clock in the morning, and according to John’s calculation, the sixth hour is about 6 o’clock in the morning or at sunrise, when Jesus was accused by Pilate.
Each of the Gospel writers refers to the superscription nailed to the cross above the head of Jesus. The charge against Him is: ‘JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.’ Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. You can see how important this written notice is to His disciples. It was written in the three most common languages in Jesus’ time: Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Not all of Jesus’ words on the cross are written in all

the Gospels. Only Luke records Jesus speaking to the dying thief. John alone records Jesus' words to His mother and to the apostle John.
'So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews', but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews. '" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written"' (John 19:21–22).
Why did Pilate refuse to change the inscription above Jesus' head? Pilate had enough reasons, and the ever-demanding Jews bothered him. His wife warned him, and now he had fallen into the wasp's nest.
The Jewish leaders used him as a marionette, compelling him to sentence Jesus to death contrary to his own will, knowing Jesus was innocent.
It was no accident when Jesus was crucified between two malefactors. It sums up the attitude of men and the two houses of Israel towards Christ. One of the thieves on the cross learned about God's grace. As the malefactor was about to die, he turned to Jesus, and Jesus accepted him. This affirms that our deeds will never save us, and hanging on a tree made him inadequate. Our faith and the working of God's grace will save us.
Right away, we notice the contrast between the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. The attitude of the first thief was cold, and he was totally unrepentant. Even nearing his own death, he mocked Jesus, daring Him to prove Himself to be the Christ, the Messiah, by saving Himself and them.
The attitude of the second thief was totally different. We notice that he feared God, and he rebuked the other thief for not fearing God. He acknowledged his own sinfulness and recognised his own helplessness. He realised that his own punishment was justly deserved, but that Jesus was blameless. By calling Jesus 'Lord', he confessed his belief in Christ and pleaded for mercy. By merely expressing his faith in Christ, he shared in His kingdom. He recognised that Jesus was the 'One' He had claimed to be.
Considering all the opinions we have of the malefactors, there appear to be some discrepancies. Some students argue there were four malefactors: two before His crucifixion and two afterwards. It is impossible to write down everything in chronological sequence, especially when so many things are happening. Some Gospel writers mentioned the two malefactors before Jesus was crucified, and the others after Jesus was crucified. We have no reason to discredit the Word of God, and I believe there were two malefactors and not four. The one was on His left and the other on His right.
We are familiar with the phrase 'paradise'. When our Lord died, He said to the one beside Him: 'Today you will be with Me in paradise.' He meant the paradise or Hades that our Lord conquered on that day. We as the Church do share Christ's resurrection from the dead, and we will never descend to Sheol, Hades, or the underworld, as our home is in heaven. Paul said he was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to voice (2 Corinthians 12:4). The third heaven is also called the paradise of God. It says when Satan was created, he spent his time in the Garden of God (Ezekiel 28:13). The other paradise was the Garden of Eden. Thus, we

have the Garden of God, the Garden of Eden, and the paradise (garden) in Sheol.
One of the thieves asked Jesus for mercy, and He replied, saying: ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise.’ Our first question will be—where is paradise?
There has always been a separation of believers and unbelievers after death (Luke 16:19–31). The righteous went to paradise, wherever it may be, and the wicked had to ‘wait’ in Sheol or Hades until they are punished. Presently, the righteous and the wicked are in ‘temporary holding places’: in paradise, which is part of Sheol or Hades. Abraham and the Old Testament believers need to wait until our Lord returns.
When our Lord said, ‘Today you will be with Me in paradise,’ He meant the paradise or Hades, the place our Lord conquered on that day. We are different, and the reason is that since Christ’s death and resurrection, the believers will never need to stare death in the eyes, as we are totally part of heaven. We will never descend into the abyss as Jesus did to conquer death. Paul said he was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to voice (2 Corinthians 12:4). Abraham’s bosom is referred to only once in the Bible—in the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19–31). In this passage, Lazarus was at Abraham’s bosom. Sheol or Hades is a temporary ‘refuge’ for the righteous souls of the Old Testament saints, who eagerly await their final resurrection on the ‘last day’.
We reach a point in history when both houses of Israel deserted Christ. The ten tribes of Israel disappeared in the Assyrian captivity, and the Jewish nation rejected Jesus. What happened to all the promises God made to Israel?
It was like King David asking: ‘Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?’ Jonathan was David’s bosom friend, and he portrays the believing remnant from Israel. Jonathan died, and King Saul’s house was derelict. King David searched, and he found someone, and his name was Mephibosheth. When Mephibosheth was five years old, his father Jonathan was killed in a battle. Fearing the Philistines, the young boy and a nurse fled with him to a royal residence, but in her haste, she dropped him, and both his feet were crippled (2 Samuel 4:4). Both his feet were lame, and his two feet portray both the two houses of Israel. Some years later, when King David had conquered all of Israel’s enemies, he remembered the family of his friend Jonathan (2 Samuel 9:1) and sought to show his loyalty to Jonathan. David sent his royal messengers to find Mephibosheth and his infant son Micah, and they were blessed, allowed to remain at the king’s residence throughout his life (2 Samuel 9:19? [Note: Original reference seems erroneous; likely 2 Samuel 9:7 or similar]). King David’s mercy towards Mephibosheth is equated to the mercy we received in Christ. Even though both of Mephibosheth’s feet were crippled, he was blessed. Today, the Church is blessed even though both houses of Israel deserted Him. Mephibosheth proves the old covenant is obsolete and crippled, and we who are part of the new covenant stand on a new pair of feet. We are like the crippled man who was healed by Jesus. John 5:1–15

Our Lord represented all humankind when He died on the cross, and in God's eyes, He was the greatest of sinners. It was not His sins, but He patiently carried the burden of the world's sin. It was imputed on Him. He alone had the right to die as our substitute, and luckily He did. The problem of sin is God's problem, and He freed us totally. We need to accept Christ, and if we refuse Him, our sin of disbelief cannot be forgiven. When Christ died on the cross, He satisfied God's righteousness, and thus we can be reconciled to God. All the sins we deem as 'unforgivable' are cleared, and there is no excuse to reject Christ's offer of salvation. It is dealt with. From God's perspective, Jesus was the greatest sinner who ever lived on earth. Whenever we read Psalm 51, do not think about King David. Read it a second time, standing in Jesus' feet, carrying the burden of our and the world's sin. He was despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3), and He paid the ransom price for all our sins and even the two malefactors who were crucified with Him. The unbelief of the one malefactor cannot be forgiven, who chanted with the crowd, 'Save Yourself.' The Good News is that God made Him (Jesus), who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Mark 15:28–32
And the scripture was fulfilled, which says, 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' And those that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Ah, thou that would destroy the temple of God and build it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross.' Likewise also the princes of the priests, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, King of Israel, descend now from the stake that we may see and believe.' And those that were crucified with Him reviled Him.
'He was numbered with the transgressors' is quoted from Isaiah 53:12. The last verse of Isaiah 53 summarises the complete chapter, saying indeed He carried our load of sin and now He intercedes for us, to purify us. He is not interceding for us on the cross—no, He does it today in His glorified body. He is our living Advocate, and God allotted His portion to exceed all other names, counting all the earthly kings (Psalm 72:8–11). Therefore, God will 'divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12). The resurrected Christ will restore the fortunes of Israel and return the kingdom to its former glory.
Clearly, the prophet Isaiah spoke of a time past Christ's resurrection. Indeed, He carried the sin of many (the world) who in one week's time had gone from 'Hosanna, blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord' (Luke 19:38) to 'Crucify, crucify Him!' (Luke 23:21).
Once the Sanhedrin established that Jesus was not interested in restoring the fortunes of physical Israel or returning her to its former glory as in the days of previous kings like David and Solomon, then it was 'Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!' (Luke 23:18). The undefiled and Holy Servant of God was exchanged for a murderer, a transgressor whose days were numbered! How ironic.

Satan fell for the gambit, thinking he would destroy Jesus on the cross, but he never dreamt that via Jesus' death and resurrection, he would shatter the bonds of death and bind the strongman (Satan). Seizing the gambit defeated him, and there is no fearmongering, as Satan lost one of his tools —the fear of death. We will never see death or descend to the abyss. The Father gave the nations as a booty, His inheritance for conquering sin and death (Psalm 2).

We are dealing now with the mysteries of Christ, and Satan was totally oblivious of them. It says that if the rulers of this world understood the mysteries, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord (1 Corinthians 2:8). For example, John 3:16 is often quoted but poorly understood. It speaks of the risen and elevated Christ on the right hand of God, and if we raise our heads and gaze at Him as Israel did looking at the raised serpent, we too will be redeemed. It is not looking at the humiliated cross of Calvary, but looking at the glorified Christ in heaven. We are bitten by the snake and we died, but in return we received a new and better life, looking to Christ.

Jesus came to earth as 'part and parcel of the law', and it spelled danger from the very beginning. The many laws prompted the people to do the unthinkable—to crucify Him.

If Satan knew that via Jesus' death and crucifixion he would be destroyed (1 John 3:8; Colossians 2:14–15), then he wouldn't have killed Jesus. Since his defeat, Satan is stripped of all the power he had. He is the master of the old creation and the old covenant (law), but now it is obsolete, as all the glory Satan had is nailed to the cross. Behold, everything became new (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old creation vanished and literally died, and Satan is left penniless.

The new creation in Christ will increase and totally envelop the old, to end Satan's dominion. It will be swallowed up in victory. The prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament are abundant, and Jesus cited them continually from memory. An example is when Jesus was tempted (Matthew 4). Satan expected Jesus to come as a conquering King (John 6:15) and not as the suffering Servant. They never thought that Jesus would die before He commenced His Kingdom. The Sanhedrin studied Isaiah 53 and deemed themselves 'the suffering servant'. Even Jesus' own disciples did not understand the purpose of His mission on earth, and once Christ was resurrected from the dead, He 'opened their minds' to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45–47). Satan never knew God would go to such great depths of humiliation to redeem the complete world of sin. He freed us from the horrors of death, the self-same 'tool' Satan loves to use to frighten us with (Hebrews 2:14–15).

I challenge any person to quote an Old Testament verse that clearly says that our Lord will die on the cross. Every aspect of our Lord's birth, life, death, and resurrection is prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures, but in a hidden manner, and I doubt if King David and Isaiah understood Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. We as part of the Church can differentiate the mystery, and to us the complete Old Testament comes to life again. When Psalm 22 says, 'My God, My God, why did You forsake Me,' the unbelieving world thinks it is King David speaking and not our Lord on the cross. The words

are written by David, but they are the words spoken by our Lord. The complete Psalm speaks of Christ, and the suffering Psalms especially advocate that they express the thoughts of the humiliated Lord—but nothing ‘concrete’. Psalm 22 never mentions the word ‘death’, but merely says He nearly died of thirst (Psalm 22:15). The psalmist asks to be delivered from the sword and the power of the dog, the people who are trying to kill him (Psalm 22:20). Merely by mentioning the dogs proves that the passage about the pierced hands and feet may have a symbolic gesture.

Technically speaking, God could have saved Jesus from dying on the cross, but He chose to pay the full penalty of our sins. Jesus did many miracles on earth, and they carry the stamp of God’s approval, confirming God is working in Him. How miraculous it would have been if Jesus climbed from the cross unscathed, to please the critics. After dark, Nicodemus spoke with Jesus, saying we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you (John 3:2).

The false witnesses ridiculed Jesus, saying, ‘Destroy the temple and build it again in three days?’ They got their stories crossed, and they contradicted each other. The main topic was the temple. Why did the people think Jesus meant that, if in fact He didn’t? He must have said something to start this rumour.

We need to study John 2, when Jesus entered the temple and He said He would rebuild it in three days.

Each of the Gospels has its own emphasis on Jesus’ ministry. The Gospel [of John] is different from all the other Gospels, as John emphasises Jesus’ deity. In the Gospel of John, Jesus performs seven significant miracles that John refers to as ‘signs’. These signs form the backbone of the first half of the book, and each sign is meant to reveal something about the person of Jesus Christ. The many ‘signs’ proved that He is really God. He presents Himself as the fulfilment of the Old Testament law (John 5:17–18). In many ways, He differs from the other synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), which are written in a more chronological order. The question is why the cleansing of the temple is written so early in John’s Gospel, while the synoptic Gospels say it happened during the last week of Jesus’ ministry? The great difference is that John’s Gospel commences with the resurrected Christ, and not with His humble birth at Bethlehem. The other major differences are obvious:

- John’s Gospel omits a large amount of material found in the synoptic Gospels, including some surprisingly important episodes like Jesus’ temptation, His transfiguration, the Lord’s Supper, casting out demons, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Lord’s Prayer, which are not found in John’s Gospel. There are no parables except for the ‘vine and the branches’ (John 15:1–8).
- The Apostle John includes a considerable amount of material not found in the other Gospels, such as the resurrection of Lazarus (chapter 11) and the extended farewell discourse (chapters 13–17), which is not found in the synoptic Gospels.
- A few times in John’s Gospel, we read of Jesus journeying between Judah and Galilee, like with the Samaritan woman (John 4:3). The

other Gospels appear to describe only Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem (Judah), with most of Jesus' ministry taking place within one year. John constantly tells us that Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the different Feasts of the Jews, and especially for the Passover (John 2:13; 5:1; 7:10; 10:22; 11:55 & 12:12).

- John is bold, saying who Jesus really is, confirming His real deity. John adopted a 'post-resurrection' point of view. He commences with the resurrected Christ and not with Jesus' birth at Bethlehem.
- John uses more symbolism and double meaning, and there are many examples: temple/body (2:21) ; water/Spirit (7:37–38) ; lifted up/exalted (12:32). He frequently uses two opposing principles or opposites: light/darkness (1:4; 3:19; 8:12; 11:9; 12:35, 46) ; truth/falsehood (8:44) ; life/death (5:24; 11:25) ; above/below (8:23) ; freedom/slavery (8:33, 36).
- John frequently uses 'misunderstood statements', as telling Nicodemus that our new birth is equated to a second physical birth, and to the Samaritan woman He likened the living water (Spirit) inside of us to the water gushing from a well.

Noticing all the differences between John and the synoptic Gospels, I believe that the cleansing of the temple happened only once, during the last week of Jesus' ministry. John said that the temple He is talking about is not the decorated temple of Herod the Great, but the temple is Jesus Christ's real body.

Jesus' resurrection shows that He had the authority to cleanse the temple, and the 'three days' spelled its destruction. When the leaders killed Jesus, they were also destroying the temple, for the death of Jesus brought an end to all the sacrifices. After three days, Jesus was raised, and He built a new temple—the Church.

The temple cleansing in the Gospel of John is written earlier to reveal what the ministry
of Jesus is all about. Jesus was going to bring about the end of the temple sacrificial system and the end of the rituals of cleansing—and unknowingly, the Jewish leaders were helping Him to destroy the body of Jesus. But in three days, everything would be changed from water to wine —and their lifeless rituals would be exchanged for the best spiritual drink of all. We can do well to ask if our traditions have become as meaningless as water, and whether Christ wants to transform them into something more stimulating. It is changing the water into wine, or changing our lifeless traditions to something meaningful (John 2).

Jesus is accused of blasphemy, as two witnesses heard Jesus saying: 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.' From the millions of words our Lord spoke, the temple is His principal charge against Him. For an obvious reason, John mentioned the breaking and the rebuilding of the temple very early in the Gospels, as we need to 'let go' of all our old traditions.

John reflected on all the events of Jesus Christ and he focussed on the events that dominated him most. He veered from the synoptic Gospels, not commencing with Jesus' birth, but with the resurrection. It is like reading a book from back to front. The cleansing of the temple was not

early in Jesus's ministry, but only once, early in the Passion Week. It would have been easy if we could unite all the events of Jesus' life in approximate chronological order, but it does not always work. The Gospel of John is an exception, as he sees things from a different perspective. If Matthew's Gospel commences with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of John begins differently. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth' (Jn. 1:1, 2 & 14). God's new tabernacle in the world is the very flesh and bones of Jesus Christ. God is no longer living in a static temple but in a living, moving person. Jesus was like us and he too experienced our sorrows and joys. He was weary, and on occasions He wept and He laughed; he knew hunger, thirst, tiredness, sweat and bloodshed, no different from us, except He was God and had no sin. He made Himself approachable to us. The Jewish leadership clearly heard the claims of Jesus Christ; but they were offended and now they crucified Him. His own disciples once said to Jesus, 'Show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied,' but Jesus replied, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn. 14:8). What a claim! To look on Christ is to see the God of Genesis 1:1. So when our Lord walked this earth, there were two houses of God. There was the great temple in Jerusalem, and there was also Jesus Christ himself. The first was merely the prototype; Jesus is the fulfilment of all the hints and promises we trace in the Old Testament. He is the reality of all that was prefigured in the types of the tabernacle and temple – Jesus is the altar, the candlestick, the bread, the ark, as I mentioned in my notes on the tabernacle. Jesus Christ is the consummation of all the symbols in the temple.

The temple looked impressive and permanent, but the Jewish nation forgot that during the Babylonian captivity, the temple was destroyed and rebuilt, and they thought it would never happen again. In fact, the Lord speaks to the woman at the well and tells her that a time will come when they will no longer worship God at the temple in Jerusalem (Jn. 4:21). Herod's temple was rebuilt stone by stone and it commenced in the year 20 B. C. , or about 50 years earlier. The temple system was corrupt and God's home had become a robbers' den. That is the background to sketch the vulnerability of Herod's temple in Jerusalem, which was raised at Jesus' trial. Every object in the temple points to Jesus Himself, the incarnate temple of God; they refused Him and continued with their senseless sacrifices in Herod's temple. Jesus denounced their practices and He cleansed and rid the place of the money-mongers. Once the dust had settled, the Jews gathered around Jesus to question Him about His authority and credentials. Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in 3 days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'It has taken us 46 years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in 3 days?' The Jews never understood He spoke of the temple, His own body. He did not say He would destroy the temple, but only that He would raise it up in 3 days. His words were, 'You destroy this temple – or "myself" – then I will raise it in 3 days.' That's why the false witnesses could not fault Him, not knowing He meant if the others destroyed the temple, He would build it again in 3

days. The reason for Jesus saying this is because the Jews demanded a sign to prove He had the authority to cleanse the temple when he drove out the money changers. On another occasion, the scribes and the Pharisees were asking again for another sign (Matt. 12:38-39). He answered them that the only sign He would give them is the sign of Jonah coming out alive, after being dead in the fish for 3 days. It is the same sign as Jesus rebuilding the temple in 3 days — they both refer to Christ's resurrection from the dead. Both these sayings prove that Jesus did predict His death and resurrection. His sonship was not to be declared by His coming down from the cross, via God's intervention, but by a much greater instance of power, even by His resurrection from the dead. That is the 'sign' to a wicked and perverse generation.

So Jesus gave them a riddle. One of the Old Testament judges named Samson shared a riddle with 30 of his companions at his wedding. This is it: 'Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet' (Judg. 14:14). Samson had seen a bees' nest in the skeleton of a dead lion, and that is what he was referring to. Jesus says these strange words to the people who are asking for a sign. The surface meaning of 'You knock down the temple and I will rebuild it in three days' is all too obvious. What is the riddle? It is simple: the temple he had spoken of was His body. Just as the Jewish temple was a house in which God dwelt, even so Christ's human nature is filled with the presence of God. The stone temple is stationary, immobile, but Christ is the wandering temple. Therefore, Christ also bears the name, 'the temple of the Lord. '

'And the Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled or templed) among us, and we have seen his glory' (Jn. 1:14). He had the authority to enter Herod's temple and make a whip of cords and drive out the dealers and overturn the tables of the money-changers. That is the God of Genesis 1:1 who chose to tabernacle (live) among us. He is greater than the stone temple; its days are done, and He has the right to proclaim to the people making money there, 'Get out!' The Jews were not about to demolish their beloved Jerusalem temple just yet – taking 46 years to erect. The resurrected Christ will restore that temple, making it more glorious than it ever had been. With our spiritual eyes, we can see and experience the glory He has in heaven. They twisted the words of Jesus to make him guilty of blasphemy. They even turned against Jesus' disciples, because when Stephen was arrested, men brought him before the Sanhedrin and we are told they produced false witnesses, who testified, 'This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us' (Acts 6:13-14). They kept their precious temple, but soon afterwards Jerusalem fell and the Roman army was allowed to destroy the whole temple to a pile of rubble. The Roman general encouraged them, saying any hidden gold they found was theirs, seeking every hidden treasure. If they had to build the temple today, no flag would be waving as the King is not present. His home is in heaven and inside of us. The Apostle Paul says we are here to help others, but before we can help others, we must help ourselves (1 Tim. 4:16). Jesus did help us with His crucifixion, but not in a way they didn't think possible.

He helped us by bearing our load of sin, and the great sign is His resurrection.

Paradise

The word paradise (paradeisos) occurs but three times in the New Testament: Lk. 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7. It occurs often in the Septuagint (Hebrew Old Testament in Greek) when it is translated as garden: Gen. 2:8-10, 15-16; Num. 24:6; Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 28:13; 31:8-9; Joel 2:3; and it is also translated from the word ‘pardēc’: Neh. 2:8; Ecc. 2:5; Sol. 2:13. It is a pleasant garden surrounding a kingly palace with established trees and shrubs, adorned by ornaments. Hence, paradise is a garden of pleasure. In the Old Testament, it is the abode of the blessed after death.

Adam had no green fingers and he was put out of the garden, turning it into a wilderness. That earthly paradise was destroyed by Noah’s flood. The prevailing belief of the ancient Jews on the afterlife is that when you die, the body is to be buried in a grave but the soul goes ‘down’ to ‘Sheol,’ to linger there until the 'last day' or God’s final judgment. ‘Sheol’ (or ‘Hades’ in Greek) was not the dwelling place of God in heaven, but a holding place for the dead. It was divided into two major areas – a place for the unbelieving wicked people and ‘Abraham’s bosom’ or ‘paradise,’ for the righteous believers. Some of this is recorded in the story of ‘the rich man and the beggar named Lazarus’ (Lk. 16:19-31). Note in this parable, Abraham is in charge of the ‘Paradise’ side of Sheol. This is not the abode of God or Heaven.

Now when Jesus died on the cross, where did He go? He went ‘down’ into Abraham's bosom or to Paradise for three days. When our Lord said ‘Today you will be with me in paradise,’ He meant on the same day when Jesus was crucified, he would go to Abraham’s bosom. Our Lord did not go to heaven but to the abyss to defeat Satan who had the power of death. I don’t believe the thief went to heaven, but he must have been one of the latest Old Testament believers. He needed to wait until the 'last day' before he could enter the new creation. If we as part of the Church die today, we immediately ascend into the presence of Jesus Christ in Heaven (2 Cor. 5:8) and will never stare death or Sheol in the eye. Abraham’s bosom or Paradise is a ‘safe keep’ rather than a final destination, a place of safety where Abraham resides. It is separated from the unbelievers by an impassable chasm or gulf. The Old Testament says the upright rest in peace, and the wicked have no peace. When our Lord said ‘Today you will be with me in paradise,’ He meant on the same day Jesus was crucified. Our Lord did not go to heaven but to Abraham’s bosom to defeat Satan who had the power of death. I don’t believe the thief went to heaven, but he must have been one of the latest Old Testament believers. He needed to wait until the 'last day' before he would enter the new creation. We all know the lyric – ‘I come to the garden alone.’ It is written in the backdrop of Mary Magdalene who visited Jesus’s grave very early in the morning. It was placed in a garden. Mary Magdalene was in Joseph’s garden and in the backdrop was an empty tomb. To Mary and to us, the garden is a paradise, where she met the resurrected Christ, mistaken for a gardener.

The garden is enclosed and private and I can visualise the meeting between Mary and our risen Lord. A songwriter of this century must have followed in the footsteps of Mary Magdalene, when she visited the garden singing:
When I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses,
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.
And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.
Since Adam fell in the garden, Jesus chose the Garden of Gethsemane to commence His work of redemption. He is the second Adam. He will undo all the wrong Adam did. Jesus was resurrected in a garden to commence the new creation. He was arrested, buried and resurrected in a garden and after His resurrection, He appeared to be a gardener, the restorer of life. Both the first and the second Adam are gardeners, and as Adam toiled in the garden, similarly Christ is in heaven working in the ‘garden’ or paradise to benefit us. The Church is Christ's Eden, watered by the river or fountain of life.
The lyric of the Song of Solomon is interlaced with a garden, where the bride and the Bridegroom will meet. The history seems to unfold when Mary Magdalene met the risen Christ. It is Christ caring for the Church, a foretaste when Israel (bride) will repent as a nation to meet the Bridegroom. Adam was told to work and to take care of the garden, and to enhance it. But he failed. The garden became a wilderness but on the morning of Jesus' resurrection, He toiled in the garden. Mary Magdalene did not recognise Him; instead, she spoke to Him, assuming Him to be a gardener. Well, who else could it be, at that time in the morning? Yes, He proved to be the real Gardener, the last Adam, to make the wilderness bloom again. Mark 15:33–37And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of those that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calls Elijah. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar and put it on a reed and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down. But Jesus, giving a great cry, expired. The darkness the world experienced is not God hiding His face from Jesus on the cross, leaving Him vulnerable. No, it pictures a real world that refused Christ. If the world does, then the world is totally dark, walking in spiritual darkness. ‘If they deny the Holy One and the Just, demanding a murderer to be released, killing the Prince of life, then darkness will pursue’ (Acts 3:14). Today men and women choose to live in darkness. The reason is men love darkness more than light because it hides their evil deeds. John’s Gospel is clear, saying Christ is the only light shining in our dark world (1:5; 3:19-22; 18:12; 12:46) and his central theme is the light opposing the darkness our world experiences. Isn’t it strange that the

darkness (from 12:00 – 15:00) on the day of Jesus' crucifixion is only mentioned in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) but not in John's Gospel? The darkness the disciples are talking about is prophesied many times in the Old Testament and especially in Isaiah 60:1-2. Presently our world is dumped in darkness and the only shining light or hope we have is the resurrected Christ. 'Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise on you, and his glory shall be seen on you' (Isa. 60:1-2). The great darkness is contrasted to the glorious light and glory to be revealed. If we slumber, we are part of the darkness and we need to arise and be awake. The preceding chapter (Isaiah 59) ends with the Day of the Lord, relating the events to Christ's return to earth. Christ will put on His helmet of salvation, his breastplate of righteousness and His garments of vengeance (59:17) ; the Redeemer will claim Zion and He means business. The Apostle Paul quotes this verse and says it is presently fulfilled in us, as we are like 'lights shining in a dark world.' We need to be awake and not try to meddle in a world of darkness thinking we have the means to change the world. A non-repentant Jerusalem as in Jesus' time will always be a burdensome stone. Each nation meddling in Syria or Jerusalem will stumble as Jerusalem has a bloody history. Jesus said: 'And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.' Well, Isaiah looked ahead in time to the Day of the Lord, when the people of the world will repent and shine! Why – because the glory of the Lord will rise upon them - Christ Himself who is the light. After the rapture of the Church when all the believers are gone, the world will be truly dark and the great tribulation will commence – it will be dark both physically and spiritually. Jesus spoke about the darkness that exists at the time of His return. The light of the sun, moon and stars will withdraw (Matt. 24:29-30). The light is shining today and Isaiah 60 continues to say: 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.' Lift up your eyes round about and see. They all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried in the arms. Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you. ……. Who are these who fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?' (60:3-8)

It refers to a vast number of believers who were never mentioned before, and they are compared to a 'cloud' for the number of them, covering Judea as the clouds do the heavens; and as for us who are the believers, we will be in the clouds, raised from a dark, dark world and in heaven today. We are swift as a 'cloud' escaping the dangers of the impending great tribulation, from the wrath of God that will be spilled on earth. We have a safe refuge in Christ. We as the Church are the doves who represent the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer who trusts in Christ. The dove is described in all four Gospels (Matt. 3:15; Mark 1:10; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32). Once Jacob asked Joseph when he saw his sons: 'Who are these?' (Gen. 48:8). It is like Isaiah asking who are they that fly on the clouds? Joseph's sons epitomise the lost tribes of Israel who have surfaced

today and in the future on the Day of the Lord, when all the tribes of Israel will amalgamate, to its former glory. The Apostle Paul says we lived in darkness, and much worse than that, we were darkness! ‘Once we were full of darkness’ (Eph. 5:8). The Apostle Paul continues to say: ‘Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you’ (Eph. 5:13-14). He does not say the light will shine on us, but Christ will shine on us as He alone is the Light. Ezekiel was puzzled when he saw the cherubs or the glory of God. ‘I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him’ (Ezek. 1:27). The glory of the shining light Ezekiel saw is the resurrected Christ, or the Cherubs. Isaiah 8 paints a bleak picture of the 10 lost tribes of Israel who were taken into the Assyrian captivity. The chapter ends: ‘They shall look upon the earth and behold tribulation and gross darkness, darkness and anguish; and they shall be submerged in gross darkness’ (8:22). Isaiah 9 commences by naming the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, to a people by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. The gloom will be dispelled for those who were anxious.

‘The people (10 lost tribes of Israel) who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You, according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For you have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor……. . . For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this’ (Isa. 9:1-7). There are no ‘buts’ as it is in the making today. There isn't any doubt in my mind. This passage is Messianic and I believe Isaiah is giving a clear prophecy of Christ and the Church today, comprising mostly of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, mentioning Galilee, Naphtali and Zebulun and ‘by the way of the sea.’ Matthew quotes this passage and he applies it to Christ! It commenced when Jesus frequented Galilee doing many miracles. Matthew says:

‘Now when Jesus heard that John had been imprisoned, he went into Galilee. While in Galilee, He moved from Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, and on those who sit in the region and shadow of death a light has dawned. From that time Jesus began to preach this message: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near’ (Matt. 4:12-15). Isaiah is unfolding the events we experience today. He was so convinced these things would happen, he spoke of them as if they already had. The great light can be none other than Jesus Christ. This passage is not about Jesus' birth at Bethlehem. No,

the passage we love to recite at Christmas speaks about the resurrected Christ. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His (resurrected Christ) shoulders, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
The Jewish nation experienced the end of King Zedekiah's reign, but Christ's kingdom will never end and the Church or the 10 lost tribes of Israel are the first to invite Him as a nation.
The darkness enveloped our world at 12 o'clock at midday until the 9th hour or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The number 9 portrays our world that is inflicted with sufferings. A woman's pregnancy lasts for 9 months, and the labour pains end with the joy of knowing a child is born. Pharaoh in Egypt did not listen to Moses, and he endured the 9 plagues. The 10th plague was a curse to kill each possible firstborn in Egypt at night, and the next morning only the real firstborn or Israel remained in Egypt. After the 9 plagues, all the firstborn in Egypt were killed, in anticipation of the real firstborn. Many are fooled thinking God turned a blind eye to the suffering Jesus on the cross and thus the darkness. The darkness pictures a void world, as in the days before Adam was created. Only Christ can fill the void, and if the world crucifies Him, they can taste what is awaiting them.
About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,'—which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
'These words that Jesus cried out as he was hanging on the Cross have been debated by many Christians and many are teaching that Jesus became sin, and God cannot look on sin, and thus God forsook His Son. Others maintain God cannot forsake Jesus when He needed Him the most: 'I and my Father are one' (Jn. 10:30). 'You (disciples) will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me' (Jn. 16:32). Some students argue sin can also be translated as 'sin offering' as in the NIV version. In Greek 'sin' is translated as 'hamartia' (Strong's no. 266) which is translated as sin or sinful, but in the Book of Romans 8:3 it is wrongly translated as sin offering: 'For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.' It is the only occurrence when sin is translated as 'sin offering.' Nearly all translators agree it ought to be written 'to be sin for us,' and not a sin offering. The Greek word 'hamartia' occurs 173 times in the New Testament and is always translated as sin or sinful and never as a sin offering.
Jesus was no High Priest on earth, and His death was no offering to please God. His humiliated death was NO sacrifice to God, but His resurrected and glorified body is a pleasing sacrifice to God. His death was humiliating but it was the only means to conquer death and sin. All the Old Testament offerings picture Christ's resurrection and not His death at Calvary. Hebrews 6:8; 10:5-6 & 13:11 says clearly God did not desire burnt and sin offerings and the offerings of the Old Testament point to the 'One and only' ultimate sacrifice – His body on the day of His resurrection. Presently He is our High Priest and His work is not complete, cleansing us daily.
When Jesus was dying on the cross, He knew His Father was right there

with Him, and God’s keeping that promise ran until His resurrection from the dead. When Jesus was arrested, and Peter pulled out his knife to fight the soldiers, He said: ‘Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?’ (Matt. 26:53). He had the means but He was counting on God to be there for Him.

Many use the verse, ’My God why hast thou forsaken me’ as evidence that the Father turned His back on Jesus when He was hanging on the cross. God never left Jesus ‘in the lurch’ and there is a big difference between making an assertion and asking a question. ‘Why did you forsake me’ and the word ‘why’ can also be translated as ‘for how long will You forsake Me’. The word ‘why’ (Strong's no. 4100) is translated in Job 7:19. At that moment, He identified Himself with every person who felt abandoned by God, like Adam who hid himself after he sinned. He too hid, felt ashamed, abandoned and isolated, too frightened to approach God when He looked for him.

It is the only time Jesus ever called His Father ‘God’ and not ‘Father.’ The Gospels don't record an answer to His question, ‘Why hast thou forsaken me,’ but Psalm 22 does. In response, there is an answer in verse 24. The answer to the question was on Jesus' lips when He recited the Psalm, or each person who feels abandoned. He will never forsake us or our Lord hanging on the cross. The Psalmist says: ‘For He did not despise or detest the suffering of the oppressed; He did not ignore Him; when He cried out to Him, He responded’ (22:24). God will never forsake our Lord on the cross for ‘in Christ, He reconciled the world to Himself!’ (2 Cor. 5:19). Jesus didn't feel close to God and it seemed as if the Father had forsaken Him, but He didn't! Nor will He ever forsake you. He had to wait until the 3rd day, when He resurrected as part of a total new creation – a new beginning. In Christ Jesus, sin has been destroyed - finished - end of story. Through our Lord’s finished work on the cross, sin has been defeated! God hates sin because of what it does to us, not because it does anything to Him. Jesus felt forsaken, but He was not. The Father did hear His cry and, as the empty tomb three days later proves, He did not forsake Him. He carried Him through His death to a glorious resurrection on the other side. We share in the greatness of His deliverance. The question is better phrased as: ‘Father, how long before you will deliver me.’ I don’t believe that the package of our sins was bundled on Jesus' shoulders at Gethsemane, Golgotha or at Calvary, but it was placed on Him since He lived on earth. It burdened Him throughout His life and yet He communed with God. Returning to Psalm 51, we may question why the psalmist said ‘against thee only have I sinned.’ Psalm 51:4 is a prayer by David, and it appears he prayed, begging for forgiveness after committing fornication with Bathsheba. How could he have said to God, ‘Against thee, thee only, have I sinned’? There is no question that David sinned against Bathsheba, her husband Uriah whom he killed and not to even speak of all the family members and His personnel who were knowledgeable. These words ‘against thee only have I sinned’ are spoken by our Lord, words He uttered on the cross, while carrying our load of sin. Jesus quoted Psalm 22 and the words: My God why hast Thou forsaken Me, v. 1 is not a cry of despair at

being forsaken by God, but rather a cry, a proclamation to the Jews gathered at Golgotha, that what was taking place before their eyes is a sure fulfilment of Messianic prophecies, and that He really is the subject of Psalm 22. As for the idea of some students who believe that Jesus was forsaken by God, it is answered in verse 24. It says specifically that God will not forsake the suffering Messiah. Well, Jesus quoted the beginning and the end of one of the most famous and well-known Psalms, the most memorised sections of all of the Old Testament, a prophecy unfolding right in front of their eyes. Psalm 22 commences with ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me’ and the last words Jesus uttered or the last verse of Psalm 22 is ‘It is finished’ (Jn. 19:30). Three times in Psalm 22, He says that His redemption is not far away. Why are you so far from helping me? (v. 1) Do not be far from me. (v. 11, 19) The pain He experienced is like a mother in labour. His death is the only means to procure our salvation. He did bear our sins and while on the cross, He expected His sure awaited deliverance. It is similar to the joy any mother experiences after a distressing birth. Using metaphorical language, Psalm 22 clearly describes a person dying. The words: ‘All my bones’—is to imply that: ‘Every bone in His body is tired.’ That doesn’t mean all 216 of his bones are dislocated, however it felt like it, a simple figure of speech. His heart, the most critical organ in His body, ‘turned to wax.’ A ‘potsherd’ was an old piece of pottery dried by the sun—Jesus’ strength ebbed away. His tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth—from the cross He said, ‘I thirst. ’
The Psalm ends with a crescendo of praise and promises pointing to some of the Millennial Kingdom blessings for God’s people, and to the Church today. With each dying breath, He affirms to everyone present that He was indeed the Word of God, the One He said He was—the Messiah, the Son of the living God, the Redeemer of Israel and all who in the future would believe on Him. God did not forsake His Son, and He proved it with His resurrection.

When the people heard Jesus say, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (Mark 15:34) —or, in translation, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1) —the bystanders who heard Him cry out these words misunderstood them and thought He was calling for Elijah (because the words "My God" are a translation of the Aramaic word Eli). Aramaic is a Hebrew-like language, His native tongue. Since the Jewish nation returned from the Babylonian captivity, they had spoken Aramaic rather than Hebrew.
So why did they get the wrong idea about Him? The reason is that they expected a great leader, and perhaps He was the "Elijah" the people were waiting for. They knew from Scripture that the prophet Elijah would return to earth to finish his work. Malachi, the latest Old Testament prophet, said: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5). Elijah, you will remember, did not die like ordinary people. These Jewish people knew he had been taken up by God into the heavens (2 Kings 2:11), expecting him to return to "restore all things" as the forerunner of the Messiah. Even to this day, many Jewish families, during the Seder meal at Passover, set aside a cup

filled with wine—awaiting Elijah's coming as the "invisible guest" at the table.

The religious leaders in Jesus' time knew some prophet would come, and Jesus posed a question to His disciples, saying: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13). They said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, some Jeremiah, or even one of the prophets.” The people did not understand the Scriptures. I ask: why, from all the prophets, was Jeremiah named by the crowds, and why are most Christians unaware of Jeremiah's history? The reason is that Jeremiah had a dual mission: to warn Judah of its coming destruction, but he also had another mission to accomplish—"to build.” The Bible is not clear about his final mission. The religious leaders argued he might return to finally accomplish it. Since Judah was taken captive into the Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah is quiet about the whereabouts of Judah, but quietly he ensured the seed of King David would not end, as King Saul had no heirs. Jeremiah 39 summarises Judah's demise during the reign of Zedekiah, who was taken captive by the king of Babylon (39:1–2). They killed all the sons of Zedekiah, the princes, and the nobles of Judah, but Jeremiah was spared. Zedekiah himself was blinded and thrust into prison, where he later died (52:11). It appears as if the throne of David had ceased to exist, assuming God must have broken His covenant with King David to establish that throne forever! But in fact, God had a special directive for Jeremiah: to preserve and uphold David's royal line. Jeremiah was freed and pardoned by King Nebuchadnezzar and given free rein to go wherever he pleased (40:4). Jeremiah found favour with the Babylonian Empire because of the unique commission God had given him regarding David's throne. Babylon, who was Judah's enemy, ended up helping God's prophet—granting him incredible favour (39:11–12). Most people have absolutely no idea why! After his release from captivity, Jeremiah headed straight to Mizpah, finding King Zedekiah's daughters. Every possible heir to David's throne had been put to death—except for the king's daughters! God preserved them for the second part of Jeremiah's mysterious mission: to plant and build up the same throne in another place (Jeremiah 1:10). The history is elaborate about Jeremiah going to Egypt (42:10), but he returned for his second mission, to plant and to build after Judah had been taken captive. God prompted Jeremiah in his mission, and "history" says the king's daughters went to Ireland; from there, the throne from Judah was moved to Scotland and then to Westminster Abbey in London. God planned all these incredible events for Jeremiah to re-establish the throne of King David.

With Jesus's crucifixion, the people were unaware that quietly God accomplished His mission—not in the way they planned. "I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them" (Jeremiah 24:6). The 10 lost tribes of Israel are blessed today, and they preserved the "seed of David," even after the fall of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. The Sanhedrin thought Jeremiah would return to plant the derelict throne of David at Jerusalem, but it happened not to be at Judah; instead, it settled amongst the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

The people of Judah heard the bell ringing, but they failed to seize the moment.

Jesus sensed He would die shortly, as each breath He took was an effort and His mouth was parched dry. He asked for something to drink to wet His lips and utter His final words. "

Knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.' A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips" (John 19:28–29).

Both Mark and Matthew say Jesus was offered bitter wine just prior to being crucified (Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:23), but He refused the drink. It may have been an opiate or cannabis, likely used as an intoxicant to inhibit pain. However, He did not refuse a drink to quench His thirst after hanging on the cross for some time. A soldier dipped a sponge into the jar of wine vinegar, put it on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. There are traces of alcohol in vinegar, but only a very small amount—it is wine turned sour. In Hebrew, the word for vinegar is chomets (Strong's no. 2558) and is tied to the word for leaven (Exodus 12:15; 13:3, 7; chametz, Strong's no. 2556), as both vinegar and leavened bread are fermented. In the Bible, leaven speaks of our old sinful nature. For a condemned criminal hanging on a cross, it is practically impossible to drink from a cup. So when Jesus said He was thirsty, the soldiers used a sponge to give Him the vinegar to quench His thirst.

Hyssop is used in the Bible as a sponge-like scrub with blue flowers and highly aromatic leaves. Both Mark and Matthew describe it as a "stick" or "reed." Hyssop prefers rocky terrain, and its flowers are like lavender. No doubt, John had the Old Testament offerings in mind when he wrote his Gospel.

Hyssop is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament with cedar wood and scarlet; it was mingled with the blood of a clean bird to cleanse a leprous person or burnt with the red heifer outside the camp (Leviticus 14; Numbers 19). When the Israelites marked their doorposts with the lamb's blood so that the angel of death would pass over them, God instructed them to use a bunch of hyssop as a "paintbrush," implying His people as "pure," freed from the judgement God was about to bring on the Egyptians (Exodus 12:22). David also mentions hyssop in Psalm 51:7: "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. "

With Jesus' crucifixion, the Roman soldiers offered Him a drink of wine vinegar on a sponge at the end of a stalk of hyssop. In fact, it was Jesus' last act before He declared His work on earth finished and gave up His spirit. Why did they choose hyssop? Possibly because Jesus bought our forgiveness with His sacrifice. Just as in the Old Testament blood and hyssop purified a defiled person, so Jesus purifies us.

Psalm 69 was literally fulfilled by Jesus—a well-known psalm portraying His crucifixion: "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst" (69:21). Jesus refused the first time they offered Him wine. Psalm 69 commences: "Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying;

my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God. More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause. " After the psalm says they gave me vinegar for my thirst, David cites what will happen to the religious leaders who gathered around Him: "May their table before them become a snare; and when they are in peace, may it become a trap. May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, and make their loins shake continually" (vv. 22–23). Since they rejected Christ, they can expect the worst and God's judgement, which is still looming over Jerusalem today. It is also cited by Paul (Romans 11:9–10). The waters of death threatened our Lord, and He did sink in the mire where there is no foothold. Death pulls us away from God to the dungeons of the deep, but Christ spared us the ride to the abyss. Our future and destination is to be caught up to be with Christ in heaven.

The Seven Statements from the Cross

If we had witnessed Jesus' crucifixion, we would have heard Him make seven statements, and they are even valid today. They are:

1. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).
   Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy that He would make "intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). In reality, He was speaking to all of us. As Peter explained weeks later, in ignorance they and their rulers "killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15–17). Peter urges the world to repent and turn from the sins that made Christ die, to be forgiven. He intercedes for the transgressors who mocked Him, as He does today for us in heaven.
2. "You will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).
   Two criminals deserved death, and both reviled Him (Matthew 27:40–44), but later, when one blasphemed Christ again, the other had a remarkable change of heart and responded, "Do you not even fear God? This Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:40–41). Even more astonishing, he expressed faith in Christ's imminent kingdom: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (v. 42). Contrary to common opinion, this verse does not say the thief went to heaven that day. Amidst all the noise and insults, Jesus listened to a remorseful criminal who sought mercy. He responded instantly.
3. "Woman, behold your son!" (John 19:26–27).
   Mary had seen more than her share of sorrow in her life with Jesus. Standing at the cross, she witnessed His death (John 19:25). I have no doubt that Simeon's words echoed in her ears: "This Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel … yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also" (Luke 2:34–35).
   Yet here was Jesus, suffering intensely, and yet He considered the needs of His mother, ensuring she was cared for by John.
4. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
   David once wrote, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken" (Psalm 37:25). "Forsaken" means to be abandoned or left helpless. Sin causes suffering, and Christ bore its full weight, including the emotional trauma of comprehending how sin distances us from God.
   Something else is noteworthy. Earlier that day, religious leaders—

clearly rejecting Him as their Saviour—had taunted Jesus, going so far as to mock Him with words from Psalm 22, a messianic prophecy (Matthew 27:41–43). When Jesus later cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He too quoted Psalm 22—the same psalm His tormentors had used!

5. "I thirst!" (John 19:28).
   Interestingly, one can go without food for days, but not without water. Thirst is a physical need—even Samson the strong, after killing a thousand warriors in battle, cried to the Lord when he felt thirsty, questioning, "Now shall I die of thirst?" (Judges 15:18–20). The logical human explanation was that He experienced a human physical condition. Jesus hungered (Matthew 4:2), slept (Mark 4:38), grew (Luke 2:42), groaned (John 11:33), wept (John 11:35), and so in His humanity thirsted. Jesus descended to hell on our account, but what is the state of affairs in hell? In the parable that Jesus told about Lazarus and the rich man, the rich man died and was buried, and in hell he was tormented by thirst (Luke 16:19–31). In hell, the thirst that needs to be quenched is not physical, as the rich man describes, but more in the spiritual realms. Jesus thirsted spiritually, that His desire to bring many sons unto glory be quenched (Hebrews 2:10). Once we die, we will find ourselves in only one of two states—eternally thirsty or eternally quenched—and this depends on whether we agree to drink of (believe in) Him, Jesus Christ. "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again," He told the Samaritan woman, "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13–14).
6. "It is finished!" (John 19:30).
   Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith, who "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Satan's fate is sealed, and through Jesus' death, He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).
7. "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).
   He who freely gave Himself into the hands of His executioners was now committing Himself into the hands of His Father. In life He had always submitted to His Father's will, and now in death it would be no different. Three days later, God brought Him back to life.

The Torn Veil (Mark 15:38)

Then the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom.

The three synoptic Gospels mention the torn curtain that used to screen the ark in the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle or temple. It was Jesus' second miracle, happening after He died. The curtain tore from top to bottom, opening a new way for us—a living way to approach God's throne. We are invited to His throne in heaven, and we are not tied down to this world. The curtain dated back to the original tabernacle in the wilderness, designed by God, and it is described in Exodus and the Book of Hebrews: "Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain.

Make a curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim worked into it by a skilled craftsman. Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the inner sanctuary, or the Most Holy" (Exodus 26:30–33). Only the priests were permitted to enter the sanctuary of the tabernacle and temple, and they noticed the curtain screening the inner sanctuary but never dared to peep inside. All the other Israelites knew about the sanctuary and the inner sanctuary in exactly the same way we do today. Many chapters are written in the Bible to detail it for us.

The purpose of the curtain was to separate the sanctuary from the inner sanctuary. The sanctuary was twice the size of the inner sanctuary. As you entered the sanctuary via the first curtain, you would notice the table of the showbread on your right, the golden lampstand on your left, and right ahead of you, standing against the curtain, the altar of incense. Daily, the priests tended to the objects in the sanctuary, but not on the great Day of Atonement. The inner sanctuary was strictly off-limits for ordinary priests, and they never performed service there.

On top of the ark was a tray of gold, the "mercy seat.” The current high priest was the only person allowed to enter the inner sanctuary each year to meet God. On the Great Day of Atonement, he entered the curtain with blood to be sprinkled on the mercy seat.

The curtain symbolised the barrier that used to exist between man and God. The tearing of the curtain proves that God opened a new and living way for everyone who believes.

God accepted the Lamb of God, ending the complete Old Testament system of sacrifice—the customs God set up as part of the old covenant. Its purpose was fulfilled when Christ was resurrected from the dead. No more lambs to be slain at Passover. No more goats to be offered on the Day of Atonement. No scapegoat to be driven out into the wilderness. No more blood to be sprinkled on the mercy seat. No more priests or high priests. He ended the usual feast days three times a year at Jerusalem. It is God's way of telling us that the old covenant is obsolete.

A new and living way has been opened for us, and we can enter God's presence at any moment. Now, through faith in Christ, we have lasting and direct access to God. The book of Hebrews says that the old temple curtain closed the way to the inner sanctuary (Hebrews 9:3, 8), but now the last Adam has opened a way back to God that our father Adam lost with his rebellion. Now we have the confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way. He annulled the curtain via His own body (Hebrews 10:19–20). The old system kept men outside and God inside, while the "new" way leads us directly to God. It is guaranteed by God Himself. Our hope is anchored by our Forerunner, Jesus Christ, who entered heaven on our behalf. He is our High Priest today after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 6:19–20). Our anchor is steadfast if we focus on Jesus Christ.

Many of these truths are relayed in Hebrews 9, and early in the chapter, the writer places great emphasis on the positioning of the altar of incense,

the ark of the Witness, and the curtain (9:2–4). The old covenant had many religious obligations (9:1), and the objects in the sanctuary were tended to daily. The purpose of the altar of incense was to worship God, and its smell permeated the sanctuary or the mercy seat. Verse 4 gives us insight into all the objects in the inner sanctuary. In the Old Testament, only the ark of the Witness is mentioned, but Hebrews 9 says there were three more objects: the altar of incense, the pot with manna, and Aaron's rod.

It is somewhat confusing, and the reason is that our English is limited. The words "which had" (v. 4) stem from the Greek word echo (Strong's no. 2192), meaning that the three objects were associated with the inner sanctuary, even though they were placed on the opposing side of the curtain, inside the sanctuary. They do not necessarily have to be inside the inner sanctuary. The priests had to burn incense on the golden altar each morning and evening, at the same time that the daily burnt offerings were made. The incense was to be left burning continually as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. Its smell infused the other side of the veil where the ark stood. The ark secured the Ten Commandments from falling or breaking, as with the first set of tablets. The priests in the sanctuary knew the ark was in the inner sanctuary, as visibly the tips of the poles were touching the curtain; the impression on the curtain assured them. The poles were left intact, permanently positioned in the rings, even when the ark rested in the tabernacle.

A true picture of the ark today is Christ seated in heaven, and we would not find the ark standing in the inner sanctuary. The "living ark" walked and lived on earth, and since His resurrection, our sanctuary is in heaven. He is the cherubim, the manna or the bread of life, and Aaron's rod, who was dead for years but became alive again. The cherubim overlooked the mercy seat, and they were also sewn into the curtain facing the mercy seat (Exodus 25:18; 26:1, 31). The curtain was made of fine linen, coloured white, heavenly blue, purple, and scarlet, with the cherubim stitched on them. The first curtain led the way to the sanctuary, and that curtain was similarly coloured but without the cherubim (Exodus 27:16; 26:36). When the people looked from the outside, the cherubim were not noticeable, but once inside the inner sanctuary, the cherubim were everywhere: on the curtain, the mercy seat, and the ceiling, which was roofed with curtains. The white linen formed the backdrop, since white depicts the heavenly position of Christ.

The word "cherub" is not translated in our English Bibles. It is the original Hebrew word and has not changed throughout the ages. We cannot find the literal meaning of this word by looking in the dictionary.

The Hebrew letters for the word "cherub" (Strong's no. 3742) are reflected by the numbers 2-200-20. A Hebrew word derives its meaning first from its letters, and secondly the sequences of the letters are important. Hebrew words can also be linked by means of an anagram. The anagram of the letters 2-20-200 could be 200-20-2, or 20-2-200, or any grouping of those numbers. It is like playing Scrabble with three words.

Thus, the anagrams of the word cherub are:

- Baruch (20-200-2), meaning "blessings";

- Bechoor (200-20-2), meaning "firstborn";
- Chabar (200-2-20), meaning "to put things together";
- Rabach (20-2-200), meaning "baked";
- Berech (20-200-2), meaning "to kneel";
- Rachav (2-20-200), meaning "a horseman riding";
- Chavar (200-2-20), meaning "to live abundantly".

The similarities in the above anagrams centre on the concept of the firstborn. The true Firstborn to be resurrected from the dead is Christ. As the Firstborn, He has a double share (Deuteronomy 21:15–17). The double share is traced in the numbers 2-20-200. The firstborn has special privileges, and his inheritance cannot be shared. Before Christ, the priesthood and kingship were shared, but now Christ is both King and High Priest. He inherits both heaven and earth. The firstborn receives a wealth (abundance) of blessings (baruch), and he has to kneel (berech) on both his knees. The divided world is united (chabar) in Him to be made one. The horseman and the carriage point to the Firstborn, namely the King, who will descend to earth in glory. Christ rides on a white horse (Revelation 19:11). A horse speaks of kingship (Zechariah 10:3). The writer of the Book of Hebrews draws our attention to the Day of Atonement, when two identical goats were offered to the high priest. The first goat is slaughtered, and its blood is sprinkled all the way from the altar to the inner sanctuary, following the route our Lord opened for us to heaven. The blood—or the life—of the slain goat is sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat. He opened the curtain to portray God's perfect work of reconciliation. Indeed, the blood of the goat opened a true and living way for us (John 14:6).

The nation had to wait patiently for the high priest to reappear from the inner sanctuary, and the moment they saw him, they knew their sins were atoned for. For us today, Christ is in the inner sanctuary—or heaven—doing intercession for us. We can follow Him along the living way, all the way to heaven. To ignore this "living way" or the blood of the new covenant is like reverting to the old. Indisputably, Christ reconciles us to God, and we are totally dependent on Christ's work for us in the inner sanctuary! Today, His work in the inner sanctuary is limited to the members of the Church—to those who trust Him. Once He returns, He will atone for the complete world, as portrayed by the four horns on the altar of the burnt offering.

Following the offering of the first goat, the second goat is brought to Aaron, and then he places his hands on its head to symbolically transfer all the people's unrighteousness onto it. The high priest confesses the sins of the nation. The second goat (Leviticus 16:21–22) is to be led into the wilderness and left there. Since the first goat (Christ) is alive today, the second goat (the Church) will also live. We (the second goat) owe our lives to the first goat (Christ). The second goat is not freed in the desert to die, but rather to live—as we too live in the desert. The wilderness is its natural habitat. Our life on earth is like living in the "wilderness," void of privileges tied to this world. We exchanged the old for the new, and we cannot have the "best" of both worlds. As previously mentioned, Paul pictures our position in this world as people placed outside the camp,

bearing His reproach (Hebrews 13:13). We sense this world is not ours, receiving a new life in exchange for the old.
We died as the first goat and yet we live as the second goat. Our real home is with Christ in heaven (Ephesians 2:5). He is our High Priest, and He coaxed the goat into the desert. We are dependent on the manna (bread) that feeds us in the desert.
On the great Day of Atonement, the high priest performed service in the inner sanctuary, and then the service in the sanctuary was forbidden. It is the one or the other: the old covenant or the new covenant; service in the sanctuary or in the inner sanctuary.
With time, and especially after the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish people were concerned that the goat would find its way back into the camp and thus bring back the sins of the nation. To ensure that the sins of the nation were carried away by the scapegoat to never return again, the scapegoat was led up to a steep cliff and then thrown down to die.
How sad the fate of both healthy goats? No, the other goat did not have to die; it was freed, and similarly we who are freed from the burden of the law. Many Christians want to be enslaved, but it is not part of God's plan. We are free indeed (John 8:36). Today, the services in the sanctuary have ceased, and Christ is in the inner sanctuary. When the old covenant was in force, they gazed and longed for the new, but once the new covenant appeared, the old was done away with and made redundant. The obstacle is that the Jewish nation did not desire the new covenant, favouring the old. The old covenant is like the appearing of a shadow, vaguely portraying what we are about to see and experience.
Christ is our High Priest, and He entered a greater and more perfect tabernacle in heaven, not made by human hands, but with His own blood —not the blood of goats and calves. He entered heaven to secure our redemption (Hebrews 9:11–12). The great danger in the Church today is thinking that whenever the Bible speaks of the blood of Christ, it relates to the blood He shed on the cross. Their minds are fixed on the past and on the cross, but never related to the present work Christ is doing for us today. When we Google the words "life and blood," we will note there are many more hits than Googling "death and blood.” The Bible is no different, especially when the blood of Christ is mentioned. The blood is the life of Christ, and it is flowing!
Many believers struggle with this issue, and we need to appreciate the real definition of blood. Common sense says blood circulates; it feeds and cleanses us. It flows in our veins and is not spilt on the ground. The life-giving blood is Christ's resurrected life.
"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). Without Christ's resurrection, we will stagnate at the cross.
It is evident that Christ's sacrifice is infinitely better than the offerings at the tabernacle and temple. The blood of goats and calves cannot pardon sins, nor does it cleanse us. Jesus Christ, by His one sacrifice, totally cleanses our minds and bodies (9:13). The heavenly things had to be cleansed by the blood of Christ, and our earthly sacrifices will not suffice (9:14). Thus, the blood of bulls and goats is a type of the blood of Christ.

The blood of Christ does not signify His suffering and death, but reflects His resurrection and ascension.

The rationale of the blood is to cleanse us, and the blood of Christ transmits life. He sacrifices Himself today with nothing less than His resurrected body from the dead. His blood, Spirit, and life purify and cleanse us.

Another misnomer is to think that Jesus hanging on the cross is deemed a pleasing sacrifice to God. No, the sacrifice was not His death on the cross. No, when He was slaughtered, He was stained by our sins, as Isaiah says clearly: "Like a lamb, He was led to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7). The animals that were offered to God were never slaughtered on the altar. Wherever an animal is slaughtered in the Old Testament, the body is carefully dissected, and the necessary organs are removed to be placed on the altar to be offered to God. The death of the animal is by no means the offering! Slaughtering an animal is different from offering it on the altar. If an animal were sacrificed, it had to die. If any of the Levites were unfaithful, they were not allowed to approach the altar (Ezekiel 44:9–14). As punishment, they were prohibited from offering to the Lord, but they were allowed to slaughter the animals.

A sacrificed animal had to die first, and then it was placed on the altar. Whatever lives is deemed sinful by God, and sinful flesh cannot approach God. Once a person dies, sin has no power over him, and he can approach God. Then how do we approach God? We are able to because we died with Christ and are alive via His resurrection.

"For he that is dead is freed indeed from sin" (Romans 6:7). Whatever is placed as dead on the altar for God becomes alive, and thus God can accept the offering. Fire descends from heaven, burning the sacrifice to ascend up to Him (1 Kings 18:19–39). The Hebrew word for a "burnt offering" literally means "a rising sacrifice.” The sacrifice ascends to God, and it is made alive again when God takes it to Himself.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross and death faced Him in the eye, it was no sacrifice. It was a very humiliating death—He was slaughtered—but once He died, the burden of our sins did not stain Him, and God accepted His sacrifice. Once God accepted His offering, He raised Him from the dead, and the risen Christ is a pleasing sacrifice, rising up to God in heaven. His glorified and exalted body is not Him hanging on a cross. Now He is preoccupied with His High Priestly duty to cleanse us. "

For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Hebrews 5:1). If we were buried with Him in His death and raised with His resurrection, then we too ought to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Then the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds to enable us to worship the living God. It is made possible since Christ offered Himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

People tend to think of Christ doing something for us either in the past—as His death on the cross—or they think of Christ coming on the clouds, ridding the world of sin. They never consider what Christ is doing for us today—right now. They think Jesus accomplished His work and will finish His final commission upon His return. No, our Lord is as busy today as on

the day of His resurrection, and His mission is to cleanse us wholly. We sin each day, but we are not bothered by the issue. Presently, Christ's living blood purifies our conscience, and it did not happen at Calvary—no, it is happening right now (9:14). Any works we do as part of the law, or the Old Testament sacrifices, can never perfect or purify our conscience (10:1). Our only guarantee is Christ's present work for us.

Now, something hard to chew: sin never needs to harass our mind, and we can continue living as if we never sinned. We have the best Advocate, and we are freed from all the bondages of sin. Most theologians will ridicule us if we claim this, but I challenge them to try living like that. It is impossible if their minds are polluted by the law, proving it is impossible for them. It is the law in opposition to grace—how we perceive ourselves. Do we want to be free like the goat, enjoying the freedom of roaming in the wilderness?

If the Old Testament offerings did not work and did not cleanse their conscience, why bother to be remedied by the law? Why go for therapy if it proves ineffective?

Christ is our High Priest of better things to come, a more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (9:11). The Book of Hebrews speaks of 14 better things concerning the new covenant, and here is a summary:

Christ is better than the angels (Heb. 1:4).
Better things (Heb. 6:9).
A better hope (Heb. 7:19).
A much better covenant (Heb. 7:22).
Excellent ministry (Heb. 8:6).
Mediator of a better covenant (Heb. 8:6).
Better promises (Heb. 8:6).
Better system is established (Heb. 9:10).
Better sacrifices (Heb. 9:23).
A better and lasting inheritance in the heavens (Heb. 10:34).
A better (heavenly) homeland (Heb. 11:16).
A better resurrection (Heb. 11:35).
Something better for us (Heb. 11:40).
Better things (Heb. 12:24).

To the world, we are deemed worthless as the goat meandering in the desert. God notices us, and we need to forfeit our earthly rights for the better things. Religion stirs the pride in us, a make-believe thinking we are better than we are. Going ‘out of the camp’ like the goat is frequently cited in Scripture. Similarly, Abraham was told to leave his country, and he had to go outside, to Canaan, to a place directed by God. Once Moses took the complete tabernacle ‘without the camp’ (Ex. 33:7). What ought to have been the hub of Israel was neglected and left outside the camp. The words ‘without the camp’ are quoted 20 times in the Books of Moses. We can appreciate this since the Church is outside the camp, and yet we are known as the temple of God. Many offerings were made outside the camp, and whenever the people were cleansed from their leprosy, it happened without the camp (Lev. 14). On the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), the remnants of the bull and the first goat were brought without the camp to be burned with its dung. Execution of any person, similar to the crucifixion

of our Lord, was done without the camp. Any unclean thing and even their lavatories were outside. Our Lord suffered outside the camp (Heb. 13:12). He is not at Jerusalem but reaching the lost sheep at Galilee or at the well at Samaria. Since our Lord resurrected from the dead, He said: ‘Here I am, I have come to do Your will. He takes away the first to establish the second’ (Heb. 10:9). The old cannot cleanse our conscience, our thoughts and dead works. Since we are part of Christ, we do the wrong but it does not affect our walk or frame of mind. We never need to probe in the dark asking – will God answer my prayer? I believe He does, and He will do whatever He deems best for us. Many Christians believe God atoned for us with His death and resurrection, and in the future He will atone the world with His return, but they have no clue as to what Christ is doing for us this minute. Jesus was never named as ‘Lord’ before His resurrection, but only afterwards. I believe during the Old Testament times when the high priest entered the inner sanctuary to represent all the people of Israel, the people would have followed him if the inner sanctuary was large enough. Truly we followed Christ into the inner sanctuary in heaven, and it’s large enough to accommodate the Church. There is a clear reason why the curtain rent. It is to allow us to enter the inner sanctuary in heaven. We need to study Matthew 27 as it throws more light on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion. After the curtain was torn, Matthew says: ‘And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”’ (Matt. 27:51–54). On that day, there was an earthquake and it shook the earth, opening many tombs. Many saints were resurrected and they went to Jerusalem to appear to many. More specific we cannot be, but on that occasion He gave the New Testament saints the opportunity to accept the risen Christ and become part of the Church, to become the real firstborn in Christ. The calling of the Church exceeds all the other blessings, as only the Church has a heavenly calling. That is reason enough for the resurrection and I don’t believe Adam or Abraham were part of it. The resurrected saints had the opportunity to witness His death and resurrection. Amongst them will be Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, John the Baptist himself, Simeon who prophesied about baby Jesus, Joseph the husband of Mary and many others. They did not return to the abyss but shared Christ’s victory over the dead, going to a better place or heaven. Mark 15:39 And when the centurion, who stood in front of him, saw that he so cried out and expired, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God.’ Possibly the dirtiest job is to prepare a condemned criminal for execution and carrying out the execution. The Roman guards led Jesus up to Calvary’s hill, nailed Him to the cross, and thrust the sword into His side. They twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, they mocked Him, and offered Him sour wine. At that moment a centurion was present, a commander of the crucifixion guard, normally in charge of a hundred troops. Jesus had an earlier contact with a centurion, who wanted Him to heal one of his

servants (Matt. 8:5–10). The centurion was different and he must have been impressed noticing how Jesus was bearing the shame of the cross or maybe His care for His mother Mary. It could have been Jesus praying for His persecutors, and specifically him, leading the Roman guards. No doubt the signs that accompanied Jesus' crucifixion must have convinced him. He expressed his belief in Jesus' innocence. The Jews deemed him a pagan but I believe he portrays the lost sheep or the lost tribes of Israel who did accept Christ. He started the day being a Roman soldier, but he ended worshipping the real Son of God. Mark 15:40–41 There were also some women looking on afar off, among whom was Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome (41 who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered unto him), and many other women who came up with him unto Jerusalem. Throughout Jesus's time, Mary was a very common name and it's not easy to differentiate all of them. When Mary is translated from the Greek to the Hebrew language, then it is translated as Miriam (Ex. 15:20). It will be difficult to untangle the labyrinth of the many Marys we do find in the New Testament. According to the Protestants, there are six famous Marys, in contrast to the Catholic people who maintain there were five Marys and I am sure they are correct. The reason why they don't see eye to eye is the Protestants think Mary Magdalene, the supposed harlot with the seven unclean spirits, could not have been the Mary who anointed the Lord's feet. They speak of either Mary Magdalene or Mary the sister of Martha, Lazarus' sister, whereas the Catholics believe they are the same. In short we have Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary of Magdala who proved to be Mary of Bethany who anointed the Lord's feet, and Mary the mother of James and John. Two other Marys are mentioned in the book of Acts: Mary, the mother of Mark, and Mary of Rome. I will study them individually.

1. Mary the mother of our Lord. There is no room for any doubt as to her identity.
2. Mary the mother of James the less and Joses. She is also called 'the other Mary' (Matt. 27:61; 28:1) and she is the wife of Cleopas (Jn. 19:25). We don't know much about this Mary, but she was one of the women, along with Mary Magdalene, who served Jesus in Galilee and followed Him to Jerusalem. She was at the grave and she went to anoint His body. It says she 'followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.' Mary wife of Clopas is the mother of James and Joseph and on the other hand, James is described as the son of Alphaeus (Mt. 10:3, Mk. 3:18, Lk. 6:15). Luke calls him Alphaeus (Acts 1:13). Alphaeus is mentioned several times in the New Testament. The Hebrew form of the name Alphaeus is Cleophas, or Clopas according to Easton's Bible Dictionary. Don't mistake Cleopas (Lk. 24:18) with Clopas.
3. Mary the sister of Martha, who anointed the Lord's feet. When she greeted our Lord at Jacob's well, she was known as Mary Magdalene. She was very eager and right away she shared the good message saying she found the Messiah. She was the first to meet the resurrected Christ, to rouse the unbelieving disciples saying: 'He is

alive!' If we reason that Mary the sister of Martha is not Mary Magdalene, then why is she not named with Jesus' crucifixion, to accompany the other Marys?

4. Mary the mother of Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark (Acts 12:12). She was a remarkable woman and is mentioned only once. She is like a widow and her house was a gathering place for the early believers. After an angel freed Peter from prison, he fled to Mary's house to hide (Acts 12). Luke says many people gathered in her house in Jerusalem, so it must have been a large house.
5. Mary, one of Paul's helpers (Rom. 16:6).

The women at Jesus' crucifixion Matthew 27:56 – Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.
Mark 15:40 – Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses and Salome.
John 19:25 – Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

I wrote extensively on Mary Magdalene and Miriam (translated from Hebrew as the Mary) and how Mary depicts the believers from the 10 lost tribes of Israel (Mk. 14:1–11). The above Marys and many other women escorted and served our Lord all the way from Galilee to solace Him with His crucifixion. 'When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home' (Jn. 19:26–27). A difficult question is why just prior to His death, did Jesus ask John to take care of His mother Mary?
The fact that Jesus entrusted John, who was possibly one of His nephews, with the care of His mother, and not her own children, as Jesus had brothers and sisters (Mt. 13:53–56), is puzzling. Soon afterwards, John became an apostle; he had many missionary journeys and to be accompanied by an elderly woman would have hindered him. He had lots of writing to do, consuming much of his time. I believe naming John has a typological connotation as John does picture the 10 lost tribes of Israel, the lost sheep of Israel who will tend to Maria and not the Jewish nation. It says: From that time on, the disciple took her into his home (Jn. 19:27). Remember the time when John and Peter raced each other to the grave of our Lord? They started together, and John reached the grave first, but Peter was the first to enter the grave. It is the 2 (Peter) opposing the 10 (John). The Apostle Peter envisages the Jewish nations and John the lost sheep. Since that moment Mary is entrusted to the lost sheep, as John took her into his 'house.' It does not necessarily say it was his own physical house, but in the broader sense Mary will find solace amongst the lost tribes of Israel. They maintain the tomb of Mary the mother of Jesus is close to the Kidron valley, at Jerusalem, but I am more convinced that she was buried close to Joseph of Arimathea. Mary would have been cared for

by the Apostle John or her own children, but soon after the death of Jesus, the Sanhedrin persecuted the Church and from history we know she was mainly cared for by Joseph of Arimathea. He accompanied her to Glastonbury, Somerset, with the Holy Grail. A church on the island of Anglesey in north Wales has been put forward as the possible last resting place of Mary, and close by was Joseph of Arimathea, but as expected, there are many sceptics. Jesus was born in a manger bundled up in a linen garment, but reborn swaddled up in a linen cloak, inside Joseph's grave and Mary was the first human to welcome Him. Both times the name Joseph appears briefly, to disappear again. Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation, and it has nothing in common with the Passover meal. Mark, Luke, and John all state that the following day was the Sabbath, but John says: 'It was the day of Preparation of the Passover' (Jn. 19:14). Many assume the Passover had to be eaten, thus Jesus was crucified before the Passover. They distort the Scriptures thinking that the special preparation day was to prepare the Passover. The Scripture is clear that Jesus observed the Passover with His disciples. Every week of the year, preparations had to be made for the Sabbath—food had to be prepared ahead of time, thus each Friday was a day of preparation. The Apostle John simply meant that on the particular Friday, the preparation day happened to be during Passover week. Thus the preparation was to prepare them for the Sabbath and not the Passover.

After the Passover, 14th Nisan (Thursday) was the day of preparation (Friday) on which Jesus was crucified. The Sabbath (Saturday) followed and of course on the first day of the week (Sunday) —the third day after the crucifixion, Christ resurrected from the dead. The same John also speaks of the high or great Sabbath (Jn. 19:42).

According to the Jews the Sabbath was great, because many of the convocations mentioned in Leviticus 23 were condensed during Jesus' crucifixion.

- The Sabbath
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread
- The sheaf of the Firstfruit

There is enough reason to call it a 'high Sabbath'.

The Jews did not celebrate the sheaf of the Firstfruit correctly, as it should have been on the day after the Sabbath, therefore, on the Sunday (Lev. 23:10–11). According to ancient Jewish writing, as in the book of Flavius Josephus, the Feast of the sheaf of the Firstfruit was celebrated on the 16th Nisan, the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That is wrong. Saturday was the second day of the feast, and then our Lord Jesus was in His grave. The sheaf of the Firstfruit reflects Christ's resurrection and it should have been on the Sunday. That offering endorses that Christ did resurrect from the dead and He ascended into heaven. There are multiple reasons to tie Christ's resurrection to the first fruits. The first fruits are harvested from the land even before they are fully ripe or green. This feast corresponds to our April month, when it may be too early to harvest the first wheat, but some ears of the wheat may ripen prematurely. Christ indeed is the Firstborn of a total new creation (Col. 1:15, 18; 1 Cor. 15). The people had to harvest the first ripened wheat.

The sheaf had to be waved by the priest, while swaying his body, insinuating life (Christ's resurrection) (v. 11). Study my comments on Israel's convocations (Lev. 23). 'The Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging on the cross as Sabbath approached. They asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken, so their bodies can be taken down. The soldiers broke the legs of the benefactors but when they saw Jesus, it seemed as if He was already dead, and instead of breaking His bones, they thought at best to pierce His side penetrating His heart. The soldiers knew that will finally end His life on earth, and breaking any of His bones were futile. When the soldiers did poke his side with a sword, they were shocked. Immediately water and blood flowed from his side – something they never expected. The following verse says: "And he that saw it bare record and his record is true"' (Jn. 19:35). It warrants a second look as many greater truths are about to be revealed. The blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side had an immediate cleansing effect and it worked from that moment, until the earth enters the new creation. With this, many people believed. It says that the people did believe once they noticed the water and blood. Remember the Apostle John was courageous and he noticed all the finer details of His crucifixion. John certainly wrote the Gospel as later in the Bible he again mentions the water and blood in one of his Epistles. 'This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that testify' (1 Jn. 5:6–7). So we have three witnesses: the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and all three agree. Some old translations mention the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, arguing they are the three witnesses on earth. The reason is to support the Trinity, as many Christians embrace it today. When I study 25 Bible translations (Biblehub), then 7 translated it wrongly adding the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and 18 don't, and rightfully they omit them. The core message is not the 'Trinity' but rather the water, blood and the Spirit. The true Life is the water (Word of God), the blood (the life of Christ) and His Spirit. Today we as part of the Church do testify of its working power. John ended by saying that the things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

In the Gospels we frequently find the word 'fulfilled' (39 times) and each time when it says 'that the Scripture might be fulfilled', it needs to draw our attention, knowing that greater truths lurk behind the obvious. There will be another fulfilment in the near future by either the Church or when Israel repents. It addresses the time until the Millennium. Eve was taken from Adam's side and she had the same flesh and bones as Adam's. As Eve is the first woman, similarly the Church is the first in God's salvation plan. When they pierced Jesus' side, more than the expected flowed from His side. I believe the water and the blood that emanated from His side do epitomise the working of the living Christ, and the Church that developed today. Indeed the Book of Zechariah mentions the time when Israel will see His pierced side. 'Then they will look on Him whom they have pierced' (Zech. 12:10). It will be an awkward time when the Jewish nations are aware that they pierced His side, and from the scar developed the Church. We the Church will confirm the power of His blood and the Word of God

(water) working within us. Yes then the Sovereign Lord is coming in power and He will rule with a powerful arm. See, He brings His reward (Church) with Him when He returns (Isa. 40:10). The Apostle John says ‘none of His bones are broken’ and it did fulfil an Old Testament prophecy, but many Christians doubt it. The prophecy appears in Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12 and Psalm 34:20 says: ‘Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken.’ They emphasise Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 are no prophecies, as they were commanded not to break the bones of any Passover lamb. Psalm 34:20 seems to refer to the ‘righteous people’ in general, and not to a specific person.

As I said many times before, the Bible and especially the Book of Psalms has merely one person in mind and it is the Lord Jesus or the resurrected Christ. The righteous person in this Psalm is persecuted Jesus and He endured many scourges and was crucified bearing the sins of the world. ‘He keepeth all His bones; not one of them is broken.’ It is literally true of Christ, who is a type of the Passover lamb and thus a fulfilment of Exodus 12:46. The passage is not to preserve the bones of the believers until Christ’s second coming to earth. If you had no bones, you would be a blob on the floor. Bones add stiffness, framing our body. Defining ‘bones’ in the Bible is difficult but it is best defined when God spoke to Ezekiel in the vision of the dry bones. Ezekiel was transported to a valley filled with lifeless dry bones and God told him to speak to them (Ezek. 37), saying God will infuse life in them, similarly to the time when God breathed into Adam. Ezekiel obeyed, and the bones came together, flesh developed, skin covered the flesh, breath entered their bodies, and they stood upright to form a vast army. This vision symbolised the whole house of Israel that were in captivity. Like unburied skeletons, the people were in a state of living death, and they thought all their hope was dashed to pieces, cut off forever. The surviving Israelites thought their hopes were gone and no prospect of any resurrection. The bones relay the possibility of a resurrection, and the bones of our Lord were not broken, as His ‘hope’ was steadfast, and centred on God. ‘All my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast’ (Ps. 22:14).

His bones were not broken but they were dislocated. Within minutes of being crucified, the shoulders will be dislocated, then the elbows and wrists will follow and each breath will be more painful. In the same Psalm He said: ‘I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me.’ Isaiah says: His appearance was so disfigured that He did not look like a man, and His form did not resemble a human being (Isa. 52:14). He was disjointed – and I know from my experience as an accident and emergency doctor – dislocations are the meanest of pain. His skeleton bone structure collapsed. His bones were not broken and neither His hope of a resurrection. Indeed with His resurrection, our door of hope opened, so we can embrace a total new creation or beginning. Mark 15:42–47 And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was

surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid. With Jesus' burial we get a fleeting glimpse of Joseph of Arimathea and he demands our attention, even if it is brief. When he is introduced, he disappears to be never heard from again! He performed a vital mission and I am certain he was a close relative of Jesus. I will quote the verses mentioning Joseph of Arimathea. Matthew 27:57 – When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. Luke adds a little more saying he was a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to the counsel and deed (Lk. 23:50–53).

The Apostle John adds saying he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night, also brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Together they prepared the body of Jesus, and bound Him in strips of linen with the spices, according to the custom of the Jews. Now close to the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So in great haste, they buried Jesus because of the Jews' preparation day. The tomb was nearby (Jn. 19:38–42). Joseph of Arimathea will always be remembered as the rich man who removed the body of Jesus from the tree, indeed at the most critical of all time, He buried Him in his own private sepulchre. Strangely, the Bible has nothing further to say about Joseph of Arimathea following the crucifixion. Surely this man who was a disciple of Jesus; who had shown real courage in asking for the body of Jesus, would have become a close follower of Christ.

- First, and foremost, he was a rich man from Arimathea. Ancient traditions note that Joseph was well-educated and had extraordinary political and business abilities that helped him to become one of the wealthiest men in the world of his time.
- Joseph was born at Arimathea and it corresponds to Ramathaim in the mountains of Ephraim (1 Sam. 1:1), the hometown of Samuel. Joseph of Arimathea and Samuel were from the same hill country belonging to Ephraim. Ramathaim in Hebrew means a double height and Ephraim means a double fruit, to portray the richness of the Church's blessings in Christ. Mount Ramathaim has possibly two peaks as its name implies, and the double height portrays the firstborn right of Joseph, reaching the heavens.
- All four Gospels confirm that he was 'a disciple of Jesus who was waiting for the kingdom of God.'

- Joseph was present at Jesus's trial before the Sanhedrin as Luke says; Joseph 'had not consented to their counsel and deed.'
- In the Latin Vulgate of the Gospel of Mark 15:43 and Luke 23:50 he is known as 'decurio' instead of a 'council member' to describe Joseph's office or occupation. In Jerome's translation of the Vulgate the term 'nobilus decurio' is used, indicating his power and influence. It is an historical fact that tin was mined and exported to the European continent from Cornwall, England, during the Roman period. It was used in the making of alloys.

When you visit Glastonbury, you are prone to meet people who defend the traditions of Joseph. They maintain in the course of his mining business, Joseph visited the area frequently and was accompanied by Jesus. He had commercial interests in the British Isles. The last time when Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, is mentioned in Scripture, is when Jesus was 12 years old (Lk. 2:44–52). From then on the Bible speaks only of His mother and brothers. The clear implication is that Joseph died when Jesus was a young man or teenager, and since then, Joseph of Arimathea was his legal father. The Jewish laws are clear as the nearest male relative would have the responsibility to assist the widow and her children. Throughout the history of Israel there always seemed to be a 'backup plan' when things seemed to go wrong as in the history of Abraham. Abraham's own family were too keen to help him. A difficult time was when Jacob escaped Esau. Both Isaac and Jacob's wives were daughters born from Nahor, or Abraham's brother and he too left Mesopotamia. When Jacob feared the moment to meet Esau, he split his family in two to guarantee if the one party got killed, the other will survive. Similarly when Joseph the husband of Mary died, another Joseph appeared from Arimathea. With Jesus' birth, He was wrapped in linen and Mary and Joseph were His parents. With His crucifixion, we have the linen but a different Joseph, but they do portray the 10 lost tribes of Israel, coming from Ephraim's country. Linen suggests 'the righteous deeds of the holy' (Rev. 19:8). White linen symbolises the new creation, in contrast to the wool, which represents the old man. The linen advocates the resurrection and the new life that emanates from it. The Man dressed in white linen (Dan. 10:5) is the risen Christ. It is quite obvious that the husband of Mary died while Jesus was young. Joseph must have been Jesus' legal guardian and it will explain why tradition reports that Jesus, as a boy, frequently visited England in the company of His uncle Joseph. The Bible is silent concerning Jesus's life between the ages of 12 and 30. The only incident of His childhood is to be found in Luke 2, where He goes missing and is found sitting in the midst of the teachers at the Temple.

The last mention in the New Testament of the boy Jesus is found in Luke 2:52, which says: 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.' Then there is a gap of 18 years in the life of the Messiah. Under Joseph's wings, Jesus frequented many countries, sailing the waters, and when He commenced His ministry, the people were in awe and they did not recognise Him. They had no idea where He attained His knowledge. The people of his home town Nazareth asked the question, 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?' (Mk. 6:3). A son would only be

spoken of in this way if His father was dead. Most people today think Jesus lived in the town of Nazareth, working as a carpenter until the time when He commenced His ministry at the age of thirty. However, there are many hints in the New Testament that say otherwise, that Jesus did not live in Nazareth!

Notice Luke 4:16–22: ‘So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. . . And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. . . So all bore witness to Him, and marvelled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”’ There are a couple of things that stand out here. First of all, the use of the expression ‘where He had been brought up’ seems to imply that while the Messiah had spent his childhood in Nazareth, He left, living somewhere else. Obviously, he left Nazareth for a long time. This impression is supported by the question his hearers ask in the synagogue: ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ – almost as if they doubted His identity. Matthew 13:55–56 adds: ‘Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?’ Clearly, they were not very familiar with Jesus! He seemed a total stranger and the people could not even refer to him by name, but only by his relationship to the other members of his family whom they knew. Clearly Jesus did not receive His knowledge in the town of Nazareth! I mentioned Jesus’ missing years in Mark 6:1–6 and especially when Jesus is observed as a foreign visitor when he was asked to pay His temple tax. The tax collector considered Jesus a ‘stranger’ or a ‘foreign visitor.’ When we consider this event, it rouses the idea that Jesus had been absent from Palestine for a considerable time. When Jesus appears upon the banks of the Jordan River where John was baptizing, John the Baptist could not identify Jesus, even though they were first cousins and they must have known each other during their early childhood. Finally, John recognises who the stranger is and exclaims: ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ Now, if Jesus had been living in Nazareth all those years, surely John wouldn’t have been puzzled as to His identity. Later John sent two of his disciples to make a peculiar query: ‘Are you He who should come or look we for another?’ Apparently, the two had not met for years. In the book of John 1:45–48 we read: ‘Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Nathanael said to Him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. ”’ Nathanael lived in Cana of Galilee, about five miles from Nazareth. If Jesus had lived there for 18 years, it seems strange that Nathanael would not have known Him. Where was He in His early youth and is there any evidence that sheds light on his whereabouts? The strongest and most persistent tradition places Jesus in Cornwall and the Isle of Avalon near the little Somerset town of

Glastonbury in England! When the Sanhedrin noticed that Jesus was about to die, they were cautious and with Pilate's permission, they safeguarded Jesus' body to make Him inaccessible to His followers (Matt. 27:62–66). We are told that Joseph did not reveal at that time that he was a follower of Jesus. He was a disciple 'secretly for fear of the Jews' (Jn. 19:38). It seemed to help him in all the decision-making. Joseph of Arimathea sought an urgent audience with Pilate. Joseph had solid reasons to approach Pilate, and it was not on the grounds of being His disciple. Then what exactly was his status?

Under both Jewish and Roman law, it was the responsibility of the closest relatives to dispose of the dead, regardless of the circumstances of death. The eleven remaining disciples did not want to claim Jesus's body, fearing that they themselves would be crucified.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, would have been in no fit emotional state for such a task, which would have been considered 'man's work'. The brothers of Jesus, as young men or teenagers, would have lacked the maturity to perform such a task, leaving Joseph next in line. Unless Joseph had strong legal grounds for claiming the body, the Jews would have restrained him – hating the mere thought of Jesus being buried in a private sepulchre, instead of the official burial place for criminals. Jesus was at risk of being cast into a common pit and possibly cremated. They wanted to burn the dead body, as the Israelites had done with Achan in the Old Testament.

The Sadducees dared not oppose Joseph, to avoid running the risk of implicating the Roman authorities. He had annoyed the Sanhedrin, and they had never expected Joseph to defend Jesus when they met earlier in the morning. Now, Joseph claiming the body of Jesus was like rubbing salt into a festering wound!

He had to claim the Messiah's body before the Jewish authorities had the opportunity to burn Him to ashes. In doing so, he fuelled the anger and hatred of the religious authorities. Isaiah 53:9 says they made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death. It was prophesied hundreds of years before His death: the dugout grave of Joseph of Arimathea was to fulfil the prophecy. Yes, today the world views Jesus as dead and lying in the grave. If the world views Him as such, then He is with the rich – and the rich man is Joseph of Arimathea. But the Church today, as we are blessed with the firstborn right of Joseph, are partakers of both heaven and earth.

When Joseph claimed Jesus' body, he was not questioned, and Pilate responded by asking the centurion if Jesus was really dead. It must have been after 15:00 in the afternoon, and questioning the centurion must have been time-consuming. In passing, Joseph of Arimathea also had to buy the linen cloth to wrap Jesus for burial. Joseph of Arimathea, with Nicodemus and possibly their servants, had to prepare the body in less than three hours. For Israel, the Sabbath always commenced on Friday night at sunset. All the other days commenced in the morning, except the great Day of Atonement. See my notes on Israel's holy convocations, Lev. 23. In the aftermath of Jesus's crucifixion, the Christians and Joseph of Arimathea were persecuted, especially by Saul, who was later known as

Paul. He was angered and enraged, seeking to cause havoc within the Church at Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin finally caught up with Joseph and his faithful companions, and Joseph and his companions were thrust into a boat when the seas were stormy, having no sail or oars. They were too eager to see them drown. Many accompanied Joseph, and they were Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and many others. Mireio, Frédéric Mistral, 1859; The traditions of Glastonbury, E. Capt.
The boat drifted to Arles, France, and they preached the Gospel there. Not long after Joseph's arrival in southern France, a British delegation arrived at Marseilles to greet him and extend an invitation for him to return with them to Britain. King Arviragus sent the delegation, and he offered Joseph lands, a safe haven, and protection against Roman persecution. Joseph gladly accepted the British invitation and became known as ‘the apostle of Britain’. Joseph wasted no time in proclaiming the Gospel.

Mark 15:62–66
Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the leading priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. 63 They told him, ‘Sir, we remember what that deceiver once said while he was still alive: “After three days I will rise from the dead.” 64 So we request that you seal the tomb until the third day. This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he was raised from the dead! If that happens, we’ll be worse off than we were at first.’ 65 Pilate replied, ‘Take guards and secure it the best you can.’ 66 So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it.
With hindsight, we do trace the death and resurrection of our Lord in the Old Testament, and a perfect example is Daniel in the lions’ den. A stone was placed on Daniel’s enclosure den, and starving lions awaited him. It was a strange grave. He had to be dead, but he was alive.
The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal, to prevent anyone from rescuing Daniel. Dan. 6:17. Currently, we are hidden in the den as Daniel was, but soon we will escape with the rapture. There are many examples to prove that God is still interceding for us, and He cares for His people. He will keep us strong to the end, keep us blameless until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 1:8. Daniel was rescued from the lions’ den, and similarly we too will be lifted unscathed from the lions’ claws. The lion (Satan) is still alive, but he cannot harm us. The stone will be removed to open our passage to heaven. Whenever we picture ourselves, we need to see ourselves in the den, forgotten by the world and deemed as dead. Similarly, today the Bible deems us as dead but alive in Christ Jesus, sealed and reckoned as dead. Now we find a real reason for all the detail: to envisage our bond with Christ in His death and resurrection. We are in Joseph of Arimathea’s grave and are the sons of Ephraim, absorbing all the blessings of the firstborn rights. Indeed, we are extremely rich, born from our world’s perishable clay, to be clothed with an imperishable heavenly body – to be named sons of God.
If Satan had known Jesus would redeem us by His death and resurrection, he never would have crucified Him. 1 Cor. 2:7. If Daniel’s enemies had known he would escape from the den unscathed, they wouldn’t have tried

to trick him, thinking he was going to die. In the end, Daniel's enemies died, and Daniel was esteemed even more. Satan was ignorant of the new creation that developed with His resurrection. Our God sent His angel, and He will shut the mouths of the lions. They will not hurt us. Dan. 6:22. With the imminent rapture, we will escape the den.

In Matthew 12, the Jews asked the Lord Jesus for a sign, but He told them they would not be given a sign, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. Jonah literally died in the realms of the sea, but he was resurrected, as our Lord was upon His resurrection. We followed Christ in His resurrection, and similarly Israel as a nation needs to repent, to follow in Christ's footsteps. That is the sign of Jonah. Presently, the state of Israel is dead, but it will be vibrant on the 'day of the Lord', once they receive Him. Daniel, who was lifted from the lions' den, portrays the same truths as when Jonah was spewed out on the dry seashore.

Our Lord spent less than 30 hours in Joseph of Arimathea's grave, and it's no coincidence why He chose to be buried there: to portray our time of grace. There are stacks of detail in the Gospels, and the reason is to portray our dispensation of grace. He was buried with the rich (Isa. 53:9) in Joseph of Arimathea's grave, to portray the rich blessings we, as the Church, currently enjoy.

The prophet Hosea spoke of a prophecy that concerns our time. He said, 'After two days He will revive us'. Hosea addressed the northern tribe of Israel or Ephraim, who were 'torn to pieces'. He prophesied, saying 'after two days' there would be a revival, and Israel would repent.

'Come, and let us return to the Lord, For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; And on the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight.' Hos. 6:1–2God punished unbelieving Israel, and they were 'torn' and 'smitten' in the Assyrian captivity, but now they live in His sight. They are alive, yet buried with Christ in the bosom of the world.

Hosea parallels his own tragic marriage to Gomer, and his marriage to his unfaithful wife equates to the covenant God made with Israel. The ten lost tribes of Israel were unfaithful, and Hosea refers to them as Israel (41x), Ephraim (their largest tribe, 32x), 'Samaria' (its capital, 6x), and Judah is on the sidelines, as they are mentioned only 15 times.

Ephraim's heart will change, and after the 'two days' they will accept the Resurrected. Hosea seems to have started his life with a happy marriage, but soon he discovered his wife Gomer was adulterous, bearing three children named Jezreel ('God scatters'), Lo-Ruhamah ('not pitied') and Lo-Ammi ('not my people'). The Apostle Paul wrote about this, and in Romans 9 and 11 he said the ten lost tribes of Israel, who were known as Lo-Ammi or 'not my people', became 'Ammi' – meaning God's people – under the umbrella of the new covenant. The Apostle Peter writes about our long time of waiting, and he says our two days are 2000 years: 'But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.' 2 Pet. 3:8. In the meantime, while our Lord is hidden – He is with Ephraim or Joseph of Arimathea, with the rich in His grave. It seems to the world the Church is dead, but we are a vibrant body, like an army of ants burrowed beneath an ant-hill.

Mark 16:1–11
And when the Sabbath of the great feast of the Passover was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 And very early in the morning the first of the Sabbaths, they come unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. 3 And they said among themselves, ‘Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?’ 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. 5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6 And he saith unto them, ‘Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. 7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.’ 8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. 9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. 10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.
When Jesus’ body was buried, several of the women noticed where He was placed, and because of the approaching Sabbath, they had no time to anoint His body. He was buried hastily, and they could not anoint Him as they wished. The only option was to anoint Him on Sunday at daybreak. As Christ rose early in the morning, we too are awakened with Him, and that is the reason why so often in the Bible we read of the patriarchs and prophets who woke early in the morning. We frequently read of Abraham rising early in the morning, and similarly Jacob, who erected and anointed the stone after he saw God in a dream. Gen. 28:18. The night reminds us of the gloomy darkness dissolved by the Christ resurrection. Each sunrise needs to remind us of this truth, as the Word of God (Light) will envelop our dark world. If any blessing is bestowed on Israel, it was usually given early in the day. Our Lord will return to a dark and gloomy world, and the only light will be His glorious appearance on the Mount of Olives. That light is presently shining in our hearts (2 Cor. 4:6), even though our world lives in darkness. ‘Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.’ Isa. 60:1–2.
There are myriads of verses in the Bible encouraging us to be awake and to walk in the light. The Gospel of John can be structured around the seven nights, as Nicodemus quietly sought the Lord in darkness. Israel had to wake up early in the morning if they wanted to follow the route from Shittim to Gilgal with Joshua through the river Jordan. This route portrays them entering the promises of the new covenant. Micah called Israel to commit to memory their past history and the way they followed from Shittim to Gilgal. Mic. 6:5. Symbolically, it opened a way from the

darkness (Shittim or Satan) to the promises of the new covenant. In Hebrew, Gilgal is translated as a wheel or to roll, to denote our ‘rebirth’. They crossed the river Jordan early in the morning on the third day, leaving the darkness of Shittim, and there was a 2000-cubit distance between them and the ark. The only logical explanation for the distance is that it symbolises the 2000-year gap between Christ’s resurrection and the Jewish people. The remoteness of the 2000 cubits is not between Christ and the Church, but between Him and the unbelieving world who refuse Him.

The third day

The phrases ‘on the third day’ and ‘after two days’ are frequent, appearing more than 100 times in our Bible! Undoubtedly, the reason is that the ‘third day’ refers to one of the most critical events in God’s salvation plan – the resurrection of Christ, the forming of the Church, and the final repentance of Israel on the Day of the Lord. It is the prime subject of all the prophets, like Isaiah and Daniel. Today, the third day – or the more common expression of the ‘three days and three nights’ of Jonah – is one of the most controversial of sayings. Strangely, it is not concerning Jonah in the sea monster’s stomach, who was swallowed alive. The issue is the length of time Jonah spent in the stomach of the whale. Here are the exact words Jesus used in describing the experience of the runaway prophet: ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’ Matt. 12:39–40. Many Christians reason: if Jesus was in the grave for three days and nights, how do we fit them in between Good Friday and Easter Sunday?

Jesus was crucified on the Friday, but according to the Jewish method of counting, their days are not similar to ours. The days are counted, and not the nights. An example is when Mordecai persuaded the Jews to fast: ‘Neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day.’ Est. 4:16. It was a risky attempt to see the king in those days, risking your life. Two verses later, we read: ‘Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace.’ Est. 5:1. If three days and nights were counted the same as we do today, then Esther could only see the king on the fourth day. In my opinion, the evidence supports the traditional view that Jesus was crucified on Friday afternoon, and He was in the grave for the part of Friday (the day of preparation), all of Saturday, and a part of Sunday, the first day of the week.

Day 1	**Day 2**	**Day 3**
Friday (Preparation day)	Sabbath	Sunday
Crucifixion Commences at Sunrise	Jesus in the Grave Commences at Sunset (Friday)	Christ Resurrection Sabbath Ends Saturday with sunset

It is no surprise to me that different cultures employ different methods of counting. As soon as we adopt this method (day starting with sunrise), then all the supposed biblical problems with counting the days disappear. According to our way of reasoning, the three days and three nights means 72 hours, but according to the Scripture, it could be any part of the first day, all of the second day, and any part of the third day. It's obvious in Est. 4:16 and 5:1. Esther mentioned fasting for three days and nights, and said that she went to the king on the third day.

Jesus was crucified on the 'day of preparation', and it was not on a Wednesday. In all the pages of the Bible, the preparation day was on Friday. Please read Mark 15:42–43: 'And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counseller, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. '

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus understood the true meaning surrounding Christ's crucifixion. They didn't know that they were talking to Jesus, who had been resurrected earlier in the day. One of them said, 'Today is the third day since these things were done.' Lk. 24:21. The Apostle Paul says Christ was buried, and He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3–4. He understood that the Old Testament – and the often-occurring third day – was the same as ours. According to the Apostle Paul, Jesus had to rise on the third day in order to fulfil the word of God. Furthermore, Jesus also declared, 'Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.' Lk. 24:46.

During the feast of the Passover, there had to be a Sunday, and on that day was the sheaf of the Firstfruit. The first fruits from the field were quickly harvested from the land, and the 'new fruit' symbolises Christ as He initiated the new creation when He became the Firstborn of a total new creation.

'And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.' Lev. 23:11. It mentions the day after the Sabbath, and in the New Testament, the firstfruits offering is mentioned several times.

The firstfruits offering does portray Christ's resurrection, to picture His resurrection. The priest had to take the offering and wave it with his raised hand, to represent life. Early in the morning after the Sabbath, on the 17th of Nisan, they had to present the offering. Somehow, the Jewish people wiggled their way out of this, as they have it on the 16th of Nisan.

To summarise the holy convocations in Leviticus 23:

- 14th Nisan – the Passover
- 15th Nisan – the feast of unleavened bread and the 'day of preparation' for the Sabbath. Jesus was crucified.
- 16th Nisan was a regular weekly Sabbath or Saturday. The Scripture clearly says the 'sheaf offering' is after the Sabbath and not on the Sabbath.
- 17th Nisan – Early in the morning, with sunrise, Christ resurrected from the dead, and He is the 'sheaf of the Firstfruits'.

In the original Greek, Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1 and Matt. 28:1 can be translated or read as: ‘On the first of the Sabbath (week), very early in the morning.’ The people who approve of the Sabbath and the law maintain that Christ did resurrect on the Sabbath day, and the verse refers to Lev. 23:15, when seven Sabbath days are counted. Thus, Christ resurrected on the first of the seven Sabbaths between the Passover Sabbath and the sheaf of the Firstfruits, as then it was Pentecost. It suits them, saying there ought to be seven Sabbaths; thus, Christ’s resurrection is on the first Sabbath. The first day could also be translated as the first light with sunrise. We will discover that the original Greek word for ‘week’ is translated as Sabbath. The writers of the New Testament had great difficulty defining the word ‘week’. In the Bible, a day always commences at sunrise, and the first day of the week is Sunday. The same word (Strong’s no. 4521) seems to be translated differently depending on the context.

A disputed question is: when does a biblical day start? Does it make sense starting our day at midnight, or to think that a day starts when the sun goes down, as asserted by the Jews today? A biblical day starts at dawn, and the creation account gives the order of day commencing with the daylight and then the evening.

There are two occasions when the day commences earlier for Israel. It is the great Day of Atonement, the evening before, on the 9th of Tishri. It’s telling us that it commences on the 9th day, and not the 10th of Tishri. It simply helps the people to prepare their hearts for the Day of Atonement, by starting at the evening of the 9th, and the day continued until the end of the daytime on the 10th, or the evening. On the 10th of Tishri was the great Day of Atonement. The unique command on that day does not apply to every day, except for each Jewish Sabbath. We can study the timing of the crucifixion to determine when a day starts, as Mark speaks of the third (9:00), sixth (12:00) and ninth hour (15:00) of the day. Mk. 15:25, 33, 34 & 37. Mk. 16:1 simplifies everything, saying: ‘And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.’

Unmistakably, that morning was Sunday, the first day of the week. Our week of sevens always ends on a Sabbath, a day of rest. The duration of the great tribulation or Daniel’s 70th week is seven years, and then Christ will reveal Himself to exchange the old for the new. Similarly, the seven dispensations will end when the old creation is destroyed by flames, to reveal a total new creation.

The men/angels at the grave

The world refutes Christ’s resurrection from the dead, arguing that the four Gospels contradict each other. If the four accounts were placed in parallel columns, a number of apparent differences would be underscored. However, the differences confirm the truthfulness of each disciple’s account, rather than disproving them.

It is clear that all of the Gospels relate their experiences of Jesus differently, and we need to expect this. No four news reporters will write the exact same way, detail for detail. If the differences concerned the

main points of the resurrection, then there is reason to doubt it; but when the striking points are agreed upon by every witness, insignificant differences add to its validity.
The main concern is the time the women arrived at the tomb and left their homes. The area which generates the most discussion concerns the angels/men who were at the tomb of Jesus. There seems to be a discrepancy between Matthew (one angel) and Mark (one young man), while Luke and John speak of two. However, Matthew and Mark do not say that there was only one angel at the tomb, but that one angel spoke to the women.
They agree that the disciples were not prepared for His death, and it left them totally confused; on Sunday morning the tomb was empty; the empty tomb did not convince them that Jesus had risen from the dead; and Mary thought the body was stolen.
We need to carefully study Matt. 28, Mk. 16, Lk. 24 and Jn. 20–21, and to the best of my knowledge, I will try to condense the happenings on that day.
Early in the morning before sunrise, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and another woman (Lk. 24:10) left home before sunrise (Mt. 28:1; Lk. 24:1), and they planned to meet at Jesus's tomb with the specially prepared spices. While they were walking, they noticed an earthquake, and when they arrived at the grave at the crack of dawn, their main concern was getting someone to help them remove the stone blocking the tomb. They were oblivious as to what had happened with the earthquake. Minutes before they arrived, the guards noticed an angel who rolled away the stone blocking the entrance to the grave, and the angel sat on the stone. It terrified them. The women who approached the tomb (Mk. 16:2) were possibly in groups, and I think Mary Magdalene arrived a little earlier (Jn. 20:1). Mary Magdalene had a quick glance inside and noticed the tomb was empty, and in response to her shock, she immediately ran off to inform the disciples. Jn. 20:1–2.
The other women entered the tomb, and they too noticed that the tomb was empty. They questioned this, and then they saw an angel (Matt. 28:5) or the young man (Mk. 16:5) sitting. They were escorted by them to inspect the inside of the grave, and they found it empty. They too, like Mary Magdalene, decided to update the disciples, and they too were under the impression that they had stolen Jesus’ body.
Later, the other women returned, anxiously weighing all the options in response to their findings. Then they noticed two men standing by them, and they were frightened all the more. They bowed down to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’ Lk. 24:5–7.
They left hurriedly, experiencing both fear and joy, and went to the disciples and told them what had happened. Mt. 28:5–8; Lk. 24:2–10. It seemed as if the disciples doubted them.
The Gospel of John is different, and he only mentions Mary Magdalene and not the other women. Mary was running to and fro to the disciples to

share her experiences. After she returned from the disciples to again visit the grave, she had a second glance, and I am not sure if she met the two men. However, she did have a personal meeting with the resurrected Christ, the first to see Him in a glorified body. However, she was not allowed to touch Him.

When Mary shared the news with both Peter and John, saying Jesus' body had disappeared, they raced each other to the tomb, but John arrived first, though Peter entered the grave first. It seemed they were not convinced, and personally I think they didn't meet the two men or the angel. The disciples returned home very despondently.

We have the angel, the young man, the two men, and Jesus. We noticed only the one angel or young man spoke in Mark and Matthew, but were there two of them? We cannot say.

Are they the two men in the Gospel of Luke?

Luke often couples his characters in twos:

- Sending his disciples in pairs of two. Lk. 9:1; Mk. 6:7.
- Seeing both Moses and Elijah on the Mount of the Transfiguration. Lk. 9:28.
- The sending of the seventy out in pairs. Lk. 10:1.
- The two men at the tomb. Lk. 24:4.
- The two on the road to Emmaus. Lk. 24:13.
- The two men with Christ's ascension. Acts 1:10.

Many have supposed that the two men were angels, particularly by the comments by the two on the road to Emmaus, when they recalled the women's story of seeing the angel. Lk. 24:23. We know that the 'two men' of Lk. 24:4 and Acts 1:10 were dressed in 'dazzling white robes', very similar to the 'two men' who 'appeared in glory' on the Mount of Transfiguration, identified as Moses and Elijah. Lk. 9:30.

In light of this, I believe that the 'two men' of Lk. 24:4 and Acts 1:10 are not angels, but Moses and Elijah. The 'dazzling' appearance of the two men need not be relegated only to the angels. On the Mount of the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared glorious. Lk. 9:31. Some may object to my linking Moses and Elijah with the two men who appeared at the tomb and the two men on the Mount of the Transfiguration. Since that experience, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem. Lk. 9:31. From that time onwards, Jesus 'set His face to go to Jerusalem'. Lk. 9:51. He left His ministry at Galilee, His prime mission field, to be crucified at Jerusalem. The 'two men' appeared at the beginning and at the end of a 40-day period, experiencing first-hand both Christ's resurrection and His ascension to heaven. Moses was on Mount Horeb for 40 days, and Elijah fasted 40 days before he ascended Mount Horeb, or God's Mount. 1 Kings 19:8. It seems quite sensible to me that Luke had in mind the 'two men' in 'dazzling white robes', proved to be none other than Moses and Elijah.

Moses and Elijah shared unique qualities amongst the Old Testament characters. Elijah never died, but was translated into heaven via a fiery chariot. 2 Kings 2:11. Moses died, but was buried by God in secret fashion. Deut. 34:5–6. Upon their departures, they left their spirits with their successors, Joshua and Elisha. They both ascended Mount Horeb and saw

all the truths pertaining to our time. On Mount Horeb, Moses and Elijah were engrossed with all the truths of our dispensation.
After the rapture of the Church, no believers will remain on earth, except for the two witnesses. They will stand at Jerusalem, inviting the people to accept Christ, to call on His name. They can prevent the rain and change the water into blood. Rev. 11:5–6. Their power resembles both Moses and Elijah. Yes, the two men (witnesses) will die, and the people will be jubilant, but it will be short-lived. They will come back to life to ascend into heaven, and then the real great tribulation will commence.

Mark 16:9–11
Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. 10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.
Before we study the following 12 verses, it's important to note that the general opinion of many Christians is that the last few verses of this chapter are not authentic. Even though the vast majority of later Greek manuscripts contain Mark 16:9–20, the oldest and most respected manuscripts in present-day theological seminaries are the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. They maintain older and more accurate manuscripts are discovered and likely more trustworthy.
To me, that's a blow in the face to make us doubt the Scriptures, and I believe the Bible will defend itself. It is like a lion: you just open the cage and let it out. We are dealing with the LIVING Word of God, and He masterminded the King James Version in 1611, long before the Sinaiticus was found in 1844 in a trash pile, where it belonged. The Church was heavily persecuted for nearly 300 years, and the authorities knew the relentless persecution enriched their faith. Many Bibles were burned, and I believe in desperation the emperor, Constantine the Great, had a fake conversion to blend the Church with the State. Christianity became legal, and their persecution ended. They convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Constantine, who was Roman Emperor, used what motivates people to action – money! He offered various Church leaders money to agree upon a single canon that would be used by all Christians as the Word of God. Nicaea symbolised a new day for Christianity, and the Church fathers thought they could overcome their differences to finally agree which 'holy' books would stay and which would go. Codex is the first bound volume, rather than a scroll. The first manuscript is called Sinaiticus, and the other is Vaticanus. They ended at Mark 16:8, to effectively water down the living Word of God.
Recently, the Sinaiticus is available on the internet by the Codex Sinaiticus Project, honoured by the mainstream media and the general Christian public. It forms the basis for most modern Bible translations. There is a huge weakness, because the two manuscripts differ substantially. We will soon note the two manuscripts are corrupt and not directed by God's Spirit. It has been speculated by some scholars that one or both manuscripts were produced by Eusebius of Caesarea on orders of Emperor

Constantine. T. C. Skeat, The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine. JTS 50 (1999), pp. 583–625. The Sinaiticus has been corrected by at least ten revisers between the 4th and 12th centuries. Burgon, Revision Revised, p. 13. The Codex Sinaiticus Project admits saying no other early manuscript of the Bible has been so extensively corrected as theirs. In the New Testament, the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas are added to the Sinaiticus to promote the New Age movement and Satanism. G. A. Riplinger, New Age Bible Versions. Ararat, VA: A. V. Publications Corp. , 1993, pp. 559–580. Burgon had personally examined these two manuscripts, and noted that their text differed greatly from that of 95% of all manuscripts. Burgon, The Last Twelve Verses of Mark, p. 75. Mark warned us of false witnesses: ‘And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.’ Mk. 14:55–56. The telling sign of false witnesses is a disagreement in their testimony, and the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus do not pass the false witness test. Herman Hoskier studied these two manuscripts in the Gospels, and counted the following disagreements: Hoskier, H. C. , Codex B and Its Allies, a Study and an Indictment, London, 1914, p. 1. The Vaticanus and Sinaiticus rarely agree with each other, and there are 3036 places in the Gospels alone where they differ.

Disagreements between Sinaiticus and Vaticanus

Book	**Disagreements**
Matthew	656
Mark	567
Luke	791
John	1022
TOTAL	3036

Mark 16:9–20 is God’s written Word

The Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are unreliable sources at best. The following Scriptures are missing from the Vaticanus: Genesis 1–46, Psalms 106–138, Matt. 16:2–3, everything after Hebrews 9:14, and the Pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus). If you remove the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, the vast majority of Greek manuscripts embrace the longer ending of Mark 16:9–20. It is found in 99 percent of the Greek manuscripts.

The sceptics will point out that the vocabulary in these 12 verses (16:9–20) is non-Markan, and the connection with the rest of the text seems awkward at best. Textual scholar Bruce Metzger insists that ‘the presence of 17 non-Markan words or words used in a non-Markan sense’ proves that these verses were added to the text by someone other than Mark. How strange: if you examine the 12 verses preceding Mark 16:9–20, you will discover 17 words and phrases that are also not used previously by Mark! If you apply a similar test to the last 12 verses of Luke – again, verses whose genuineness is not in question – you will find nine words that are

not used by Luke elsewhere in his book, four of which are not found anywhere else in the New Testament!

If it is true that Mark's Gospel ended at verse 8, then the book ends abruptly, leaving a general impression of incompleteness.

The truths presented in the passage are authentic, since they have matching verses that are taught elsewhere in Scripture. They are:

- Christ's post-resurrection appearance to Mary – Lk. 8 and Jn. 20.
- His appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus – Lk. 24.
- His appearance to the eleven apostles – Lk. 24 and Jn. 20.
- The Great Commission – Matt. 28 and Lk. 24.
- His ascension to heaven – Lk. 24 and Acts 1:9.
- The promise of the signs to accompany the apostles' activities – Matt. 28, noted in Hebrews, explained in greater detail by John, and demonstrated by the events of the book of Acts.

The King James Version of 1611The King James Version of the Bible originated from the 'Textus Receptus', and they are the majority of Greek manuscripts which agree with each other, accepted by true Bible-believing Christians. There are 5,309 surviving Greek manuscripts that contain all or part of the New Testament. These manuscripts agree together 95% of the time. The other 5% accounts for the differences between the King James and the modern translations. Soon after the disciples died, the Bible was translated into many different languages. For example, the Syriac translation (from Syria) dates back to the 2nd century. Thus, the Syriac translation fills a vacuum and proved essential for textual criticism in the early Church history. Don't be put off by the Syriac script – it is the Hebrew alphabet written in a different way. The Syriac Bible agrees with each other about 95% of the time.

When the modern versions say in their footnotes, 'Some of the oldest manuscripts don't contain Mark 16:9–20', or 'this verse is not found in the most ancient authorities', they rely on the corrupt and unreliable Vaticanus and Sinaiticus manuscripts, better known as the Alexandrian manuscripts. The evidence is at least 618 handwritten manuscripts to two against the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. The New American Standard Bible puts all these verses (Mark 16:9–20) in brackets, saying that these verses probably were not in the original writings. The other versions use brackets or footnotes. How ridiculous! In a court of law, if you had 618 witnesses that saw something happen, and you had two witnesses that said they did not see it happen, would you accept the testimony of the 618 or the testimony of the two?

It would have been sad if the Gospel (good news) of Mark ended with a confused Mary Magdalene. It would have ended in an anti-climax, with the woman fleeing the tomb trembling, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened.

Many booklovers read the last page upon deciding if they should read the book or not. The Gospel of Mark will discourage them. No, it has a better ending, and the reason why Satan is undermining the last pages is he loathes the verses from verse 15: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. '

Do all the creatures include our domesticated animals?

Another dispute is the following verse: ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.’ Can you be saved without being baptised? Some will baptise their infants and then reason they did everything they could, and it is up to God in heaven to decide their fate. They did their fair share.
It continues to say: ‘In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.’ We struggle with our own language and pronunciation – why acquire another one?
‘They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. ’
Well, people tried to do this and they were killed, quoting the verse. Why, in a country where there are no poisonous snakes, is it mentioned, as there are more urgent matters to attend to? Why drink poison if you know it is going to kill you? I will rather flush it down the toilet.
Why heal the people if you know they are going to die?
If we drive out the devils, we know they will return with greater vengeance. Our Lord spoke of an occasion in Matthew 12 when a demon left a house but returned with greater vengeance. The subject of the parable is a house occupied by an undesirable tenant. When the tenant vacates or is evicted, the house is swept and made neat and clean. However, the house is left unoccupied. The tenant who left, unable to find anywhere else to live, sneaks back to the house, bringing seven other homeless people with him, and they all move in and become squatters. The tenant is a demon, and the house is a human being. He spoke of the Pharisees, as four times they are mentioned in Matthew 12 alone. They should have invited the resurrected Christ.
Late in the Apostle Paul’s life, he got ill, and he said he only had Luke with him (2 Tim. 4:11), and he was a doctor. I am sure the Apostle Paul needed him with all his travels. It seemed as if all the signs ended during the Apostle Paul’s time, and indeed it happened when he wrote the first Corinthians letter.
They are signs having no practical use. Any sign has a meaning, and we need to find them. Some churches, like many Pentecostal churches, do rely on the signs and think it will draw the people to the churches. It seems it amuses some people.
Why are the signs necessary, and wouldn’t it be much easier to prove Christ’s presence if He appears physically? Verse 8 says after Mary Magdalene saw our Lord, she kept quiet and only alerted the disciples that Christ did resurrect, and not the world in general. They were kept in the dark. It is very unlike the Mary we met at the water well, who left her water jar and ran back to the village, telling all the people, ‘Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?’ Jn. 4:28–32. The reality is that Christ did resurrect from the dead, and the world is totally oblivious about it. Now Mary Magdalene refrained herself. The signs in this chapter are to portray Christ’s present work amongst us today, to prove His presence even though He is hidden to the world, seated in heaven above. The main stumbling block is that the Jewish people thought He would appear and set up His kingdom on earth, but their expectations were crumbled.
The Christians today have many beliefs, and their main prospects are:

- All the promises God made to Israel are cherished in the Church, and the Church today is the real Israel. Natural Israel has no prospects of an impending Millennium, and God’s promises and covenants to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are conditional. They did not adhere to their calling, and thus God forsook the Jewish people and the covenant He made with them. The promises God made to Abraham only resulted in Jesus, who was born in a manger.
- There will be a Millennium, and God will assemble all of Israel, and David’s throne will be set up at Jerusalem. All of Israel will repent.

The moment Christ revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene in the garden belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, and the signs that followed on the day of Pentecost and early in the disciples’ lives, is to portray Christ’s hidden kingdom in heaven. Today, we have nothing concrete to either see or touch. 1 Corinthians 13 says all the signs will end, but only faith, hope and love will remain. Thus, today our hope is based on our faith in God’s living Word, and not the signs early in the Church’s history.

Mark 16:9–11

Now, as Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, did not believe.

Christ's resurrection early in the morning opened the way to a totally new creation, and the light of the rising sun is Christ's glory. Isaiah 60:1. It will shine in us today if we are not sleeping, with Israel's repentance on the Day of the Lord and each person who repents during the great tribulation. The old is buried and sleeping in the grave.

John and Peter are not mentioned here, but we understand from John 20 that Mary Magdalene called Peter and John to visit the grave, but they were not really interested, choosing to go back home. Mary Magdalene is pictured crying at an empty tomb after Peter and John left her. It is said that John noticed the linen that had wrapped Jesus’ body earlier and he believed, and Peter was not convinced. They did not try to console Mary Magdalene.

In this history, we have:

- John depicts the 10 lost tribes of Israel who did repent right away.
- The Apostle Peter depicts the 2 tribes of Israel. The Jewish people will repent on the Day of the Lord.

Remember, John reached the tomb first, to emphasise that he was the first to believe. John believed but he did not understand the Scriptures. Our Lord must have spoken to them several times about his death, but they didn’t understand his teachings. Their eyes were closed, but not for long, as later that day he appeared to them and their eyes were opened. I am sure they believed that Christ had indeed risen from the dead, noticing the cloths, and it must have felt like an empty plaster cast, but what John was saying is that they did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Our Lord spoke to them, but the disciples

did not know where in the Old Testament his death and resurrection are prophesied.
Real faith is faith in the living God and not in the words we speak, neither the words spoken by Mary Magdalene. They believed Mary Magdalene but were not acquainted with the Word of God. Mary, translated to Hebrew, is Miriam, meaning bitter water. It depicts the 10 lost tribes of Israel who vanished in the Assyrian captivity, but Joseph of Arimathea was instrumental in making her dreams come true. She was standing in the garden of Joseph, crying bitterly outside the grave. When she stooped to look inside, she noticed the two men – likely Moses and Elijah – and one of them said, 'Woman, why are you crying?', and she replied, 'I think they have hidden him somewhere.' When she turned to leave, she looked over her shoulder and noticed someone else standing beside her. It was Christ, but she didn't recognise him. 'Dear woman, why are you crying?' Jesus asked her. 'Who are you looking for?' She thought he was the gardener and she questioned him, asking where Jesus' body was. 'Mary!' her Lord said. She turned to Christ and cried out, 'Rabboni!', which is Hebrew for teacher. 'Do not touch me, for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go, find my brothers and tell them: "I am ascending to my Father and your God. "' Mary ran and shared the news with the disciples.
True faith is only based on what God says. The disciples agreed with what Mary shared with them, and they believed her, but they were not convicted by the sayings of Moses and the prophets. True faith is based on the written Word of God.
Our Lord went right away to heaven on the day of his resurrection, in the morning after he met Mary Magdalene, and he did not wait until Ascension Day. Mary Magdalene was not allowed to touch him, but later in the day the disciples were. I believe he went to heaven, to his Father in heaven, and when he returned later in the day, his disciples – and possibly Mary – were allowed to touch him. John 20:17, 20. Christ opened the door for us to heaven, to return as the glorified. Heaven is not thousands of light years away. I realise it is difficult to picture our universe differently, but I believe our world is convex and we live inside a ball, and the heavens are inside. See my notes on Genesis. Christ did not go to heavens which is thousands of light years away, but somewhere very close to us.
As our Lord went to heaven to return, similarly with the rapture of the Church, we will become invisible to vanish in thin air. The purpose of our calling is not to simply disappear from earth but to be with Christ on the Day of the Lord, when we will appear with him on the Mount of Olives, in full view of the world. The purpose of our calling is not to disappear with the rapture of the Church, but to appear with Christ in glory, to be seated next to him.
Our body will be like his, clothed with a glorified body. He looked human, as the wounds from his crucifixion were still visible. John 20:27. He could be touched and handled; he was not a holographic image. Luke 24:39. He looked human and conversed a long time with the two men on the road to Emmaus, and they never questioned his humanity. He ate real earthly food with his friends on another occasion. Luke 24:42–43. Yet his body was different, penetrating solid walls. John 20:19. He could appear in different

forms so his identity was not immediately obvious. Mark 16:12. He could suddenly appear out of nowhere. Luke 24:36. He ascended directly into heaven in bodily form. Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9. Our bodies will be similar to his, perfected and glorified. We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. 1 Corinthians 15:51–52. The dead will be raised imperishable. Heaven is a few inches above the ground and we will not be millions of light years in outer space. I believe with the rapture we will be invisible to the world, as Christ was when he appeared and disappeared suddenly.

He visited the earth regularly for 40 days, but officially he left us on the Mount of Olives, to be never seen on earth again until he returns on the same mountain he left. The 40 days prior to his ascension, he only appeared to the true believers, but not the unbelieving world, who never caught a glimpse of him. When Mary Magdalene saw our Lord, she did not share the news with the unbelieving world, but only apprised his disciples. Similarly, Moses left Egypt for 40 years and the people of Israel had no knowledge of his whereabouts. 40 years later, he reappeared to lead the people of Israel.

Similarly, we will vanish with the rapture of the Church, and to the world it is not a glorious event. They will ridicule us, saying we left the world as we were ‘out of place’ for the inauguration of the new world order. Our disappearance will cheer them, but with Christ’s physical return, they will notice us in glory, as Moses who returned 40 years later. Throughout the 7 years, we will encourage the true believers on earth who did accept Christ during the great tribulation, and be invisible to the world. We can appear and disappear randomly on earth, as Christ did for 40 days.

On Ascension Day, he entered the heavens to be a sign to us. It is a sign of what will happen in the near future. Earlier in the morning, the disciples asked so many questions – and what better way to explain everything to them than with his last sign? He ascended to heaven to reveal to his disciples in what manner he will return on the Mount of Olives.

When we study Acts 1:1–9, we find there is great emphasis on the words ‘they saw’ or ‘gazing’. It is written seven times as Luke tries to draw our attention. The sign Christ was talking about is him leaving earth and appearing later in the exact same manner. How simple. He shall so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven; he shall come in the same flesh, in the same human nature; he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and he will be accompanied by his mighty angels (Church). He will return as they saw him go. As he ascended with the sound of a trumpet, Psalm 47:5, likewise he will descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, to descend without warning, to return on the very same spot from where they saw him go.

Why did the two men say: ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven?’ The reason is that the message of Christ is entrusted to the Galileans and not the Jewish people.

On the day of Pentecost, the Jews were completely amazed, saying, ‘How can this be? These people are all from Galilee.’ Acts 2:7.

The people from Galilee were deemed rude, unpolished and unlearned, who never learned another language except their own mother tongue.

Hence, the Christians afterwards were disliked and called Galileans. Jesus' disciples were not Jews, and his entire ministry was focused on the Galileans, who he called the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Matthew 15:24. He hardly left Galilee at all during his ministry. Galilee is all of Phoenicia, with great ports along the Mediterranean Sea. Home to the greatest sea-faring peoples of that time. The area of Galilee Jesus called the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. Matthew 4:13–16

Whilst on this subject, I wish to ask a difficult question. Why did Christ choose to reveal himself first to Mary Magdalene, ignoring his favourite disciples such as the Apostle Peter or John? Why not James, his own brother? I believe the reason is that there is an underlying prophetic connotation. Mary Magdalene does picture Miriam, meaning bitterness, and she portrays the bitterness the 10 lost tribes of Israel endured while in the Assyrian captivity. She was the harlot with the seven unclean spirits who depicts the sad milieu of the 10 lost tribes. They were reached early in the Church's history and did accept Christ, unlike the Jewish nations. Mary Magdalene is a perfect picture of the 10 lost tribes of Israel who did repent, and thus the reason why he chose her above the Apostle Peter, John or James.

Mary was told not to touch the Lord, and there was a relationship between the two. It is like an engagement when they pledge to be married, but they are not joined together. It is like the members of the Church who never touched Christ or saw him, but they do believe who he really is. Later in the days, Christ did return and the disciples were allowed to touch him. Once they do touch him, it pictures Israel on the Day of the Lord when they do repent, or doubting Thomas who wanted to touch our Lord. The Jewish nations will ask on the Day of the Lord: 'What are the wounds in your hands?' Zechariah 13:6.

Mary Magdalene had seven demons, as the lost 10 tribes of Israel who were steeped in the occult. The seven demons are the evil generation who refused Christ, the Scribes and the Pharisees. Mary Magdalene does not portray the Jewish nations but the other house, and early in the history of the New Testament, they repented. The bulk of the remnant are amongst them, and her past was wretched, but everything ended well.

Mark 16:12–13

After that, he appeared in another form to two of them, as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the others, yet they did not believe them.

On the day of Christ's resurrection, he planned to walk with two despondent men who left Jerusalem to go to Emmaus. Luke 24:13. The men thought Christ would resurrect on the third day to immediately commence his kingdom at Jerusalem. Nothing happened on that Sunday morning, and Jerusalem was like all the other days. The third day is often mentioned in the Old Testament, and I am sure our Lord alerted them, and they expected something miraculous.

The two disciples left Jerusalem, perplexed, and their complete world seemed to be toppling over. Their conversation was centred on the death, burial and reports of a possible resurrection of Christ. The wonderful topic

should have brought joy, but instead it brought sadness, retreat and a sense of loss.
While they were talking, the Lord himself appeared on the scene.
The purpose of our Lord, of course, is to comfort them, but he had to draw their attention to their unbelief, so typical of many Christians today. Their unbelief made them blind: ‘Their eyes were hindered from recognising him.’ Luke 24:16. But why? Mary too did not recognise Christ, and it is the first marvel of Christ’s glorified body. He could appear as a gardener or as a traveller and withhold his true identity.
So the bigger question is, why did the Lord do this? Perhaps to illustrate how the Lord comes to us in different ways and uses different people and events to teach us and reach us. He may appear as a traveller or a simple gardener, but he will always be near to us and ready to come to our aid. Even though he is risen to heaven, he is always near and interested in us.
Our Lord asked them, ‘What are you talking about?’ They lacked real insight, failing to understand why Christ had to suffer.
Their lack of insight is based on partly believing the Word of God. Unlike the Bereans (Acts 17:11), the two disciples – who were not two of the twelve but from either the seventy or five hundred men – failed to search all the Scriptures regarding the things our Lord taught them. They had no desire to study the Scriptures and didn’t believe the whole counsel of God’s Word. They were quick to absorb the promises concerning the kingdom and the removal of the Roman yoke, but they were slow to believe the prophecies of a suffering Saviour who had to die for our sins. To believe in a suffering Saviour carried the responsibility to equally deny yourself, to take up your cross and to follow him in an intimidating world for whom the cross was a shame. For the Greeks it was foolishness and to the Jews it was a stumbling block. 1 Corinthians 1:18–23.
Secondly, the Bible is about the person and work of Christ. It is filled with him. He is the spirit of prophecy and the heart of the Bible.
The ‘testimony of Jesus’ is mentioned four times in the Book of Revelation because it will be particularly significant to people during the Great Tribulation. What is the testimony of Jesus? It is the Spirit of prophecy. The angel said to John, ‘For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ Revelation 19:10.] Unfortunately, many Christians today disdain Bible prophecy and consider it a complete waste of time, not essential for their salvation. They think the only important issue is their salvation and their relationship with Christ. Bible prophecy reveals the plans, purposes and ways of God, and our relationship with Christ will suffer if we do not understand his present work as our High Priest, or how his kingdom will embrace the complete world. To say that we love Christ but refuse to understand all that he is doing for us today and in the future lacks depth.
Of the 40 days Christ devoted on earth after his resurrection, he spent a whole afternoon sharing the Word with these two men. Does this not show us that the concern and priority of the Saviour is for us to know him through the Scriptures?
He opened the Word and explained to the men that the complete Bible concerns him only. The Bible is truly living and active and sharper than a two-edged sword, with the power to penetrate and change our lives, but

unless we respond and accept Christ, we remain unchanged. They urged Christ to respond to their invite to be with them. We too must invite him to commune with us, as he did with the two disciples.
The response was remarkable: ‘And their eyes were opened and they recognised him. . .’ Their problem had been their lack of insight, but now, via the power of God’s Word, they were able to grasp that their new companion and fellow traveller was none other than the Lord himself, and they began to experience the reality of his presence. Like a two-edged sword, the Word cut through their callous heart of unbelief. Hebrews 4:12. Then we read that ‘he vanished from their sight.’ Literally, it is ‘he became invisible’. This illustrates the Lord’s relationship with believers today. Today, in faith, we enjoy a spiritual fellowship with Christ, and he is invisible in us, too eager to open our eyes to God’s truth.
Their response? Luke reports, ‘They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen. ”’ Luke 24:33–34.
The Apostle Peter hits the hammer on the head when he says that the promised Messiah did prophesy, saying he needed to suffer before he is glorified. That was the great hurdle and it humbled many who sought glory.
Our salvation was a hotly debated issue by the prophets in the Old Testament, and they wanted to find out about the time of Christ’s visitation to earth and his return. The Spirit of the Messiah inside of them alerted them about the time when the Messiah would suffer and the time he would be glorified. So there had to be a ‘gap’ in God’s salvation plan. 1 Peter 1:10–11. Especially the Psalms and Isaiah testify of a suffering Messiah, and in the same breath they speak of a glorified Messiah, unaware of the 2000-year gap.
The theologians are smart and they will always try to wriggle their way out of this, thinking the suffering Messiah cannot be the glorified Messiah. The Orthodox Jews believe the Old Testament but they cannot grasp why their Messiah had to suffer. They reject the notion of a suffering Messiah, and many Christians are in an illusion, thinking there are two Messiahs. One of them is known as the ‘Son of David’ and the other as the ‘Son of Joseph’. The sufferings of Messiah is generally known as the ‘Son of Joseph’ or the ‘Son of Ephraim’. The Jews today struggle with the concept of a suffering Messiah, as found in Isaiah 53 and other places, and deem the conquering Messiah to be the ‘Son of David’. They change the name Jesus to Yeshua and the name Messiah to the word ‘Mashiach’, which does not mean ‘Saviour’. For the Jews, the notion of an innocent, semi-divine being who will sacrifice himself to save us from the consequences of our own sins is purely a Christian concept, not recognised by the Jewish people today. For them, grace and law are miles apart.
Personally, I came to know the Messiah by the name of Jesus Christ, and his name is very dear to me. Though I know him by many names and titles – as Emmanuel, Son of Man, King of the Jews, Son of David, Yeshua, Son of God, Lion of Judah, Master and Lord – I know who he really is. At a young age, I was taught that salvation came through the Jews from Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and I do not care one whit if some people look upon the

spelling/translation of ‘Jesus Christ’. I know who I’m talking to, and he knows who I am.
Some Messianic Jews deem Jesus Christ to be the ‘son of Joseph’, and I do not object, but to me he is also the Son of David. We as the Church are known as the sons of Ephraim or Joseph, and just as Joseph was unrecognisable to his brothers – dressed in foreign Egyptian clothes, speaking a strange language when they came for help – Christ Jesus is also working on the quiet amongst the despised or the Gentiles, and they do accept him. The believing Christians stir great jealousy amongst the Jews today. It will be difficult for his Jewish brothers and sisters to accept Joseph coming from Galilee to be their Saviour today. The risen Christ is unrecognisable to them and he is dressed in foreign garb. On the outside, Joseph was dressed differently, sounded different and generally appeared to be separate from them, but he was still their brother. Just because the name ‘Jesus’ doesn’t sound Jewish doesn’t mean he isn’t the Messiah, the Son of David.
The burning question of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus is answered when the risen Christ proved that David’s Messiah is indeed the son of Joseph, or should we wait for another? There are so many similarities between Joseph and David: both were despised, stripped of their clothing; 30 years of age was a key time in their story; both became servants, resisted temptations, described as a shepherd, knew what their future held, accused of being a dreamer, the intended target of a conspiracy to kill them, sold to Gentiles for silver coins, falsely accused, suffered as a result of rejection, spent time alone deep under the ground, counted among criminals and gave them hope, considered dead, appeared foreign and belonging to Gentiles, not recognised by their brothers, acted as an advocate, raised up from the earth. They ended their lives as rulers, against all odds.
We can study the Bible and approach it differently: do we look for Christ or are we searching for the ‘morals of the day’ – what is good or bad for us? No, the Scripture ought to be Christ-centred, and it’s not about us. It is no ‘code of conduct’ but we need to search the hidden treasures about the time we now live in, after the Messiah suffered until his return to be glorified.

Mark 16:15
And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ’
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Matthew 28:19–20.
The above verses are generally known as the ‘Great Commission’ and are often recited in many churches. When our Lord commanded this, he spoke to his eleven apostles and he did not direct it to the public in general. When he says, ‘I am with you always’, the word translated as ‘you’ is written in the plural, and I believe the Great Commission is not intended to be a solo mission.

Our Lord prompted the apostles to ‘make disciples’ of all men, and the word ‘go’ seems to stare us in the face, encouraging us to get moving. That sets the tone for the rest of the passage. And of course, ‘go’ coupled with ‘every nation’ makes many of us think of taking the gospel of Jesus to a foreign country. However, in the original Greek, Jesus’ great command is mathēteúō, which is the Greek word translated ‘make disciples’. The word for ‘go’ (poreúomai) does seem to mean ‘to move from one place to another’. However, it’s not the main directive in this sentence. Here’s a real-life example: ‘When you go or walk past the fruit shop, buy me some oranges.’ They assume I’m going to town, and they asked me, once there, to buy them some oranges. One of the newer translations translates Matthew 28:19 as follows:

‘So wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ God’s Word translation.

The Great Commission is similar. Jesus assumes that the apostles will be going about, and while they’re at it, they should make disciples of men. If you do have a clear calling from God to ‘go’ – to leave your hometown to reach people far away – then by all means go.

Making disciples of all nations is not just about conversion, saying a short prayer or signing a decision card. It’s also about ‘teaching them to observe everything Christ commanded us’. Baptism is a one-time event. Teaching takes a lifetime. In fact, just learning and understanding all the things we are supposed to preach takes a lifetime.

When we study the New Testament, we will discover that the gospel was preached throughout the world during the disciples’ lifetime, and they accomplished their feat. ‘. . . the hope of the gospel which you have heard, which is preached in all the creation that is under heaven, whereof I, Paul, am made a minister.’ Colossians 1:23.

The global mission of preaching the gospel to all the world is completed, but the recipients are not receptive. It doesn’t imply we don’t need to propagate the gospel, but if we do preach the Word of God, don’t expect a warm invite from a cold world. Our world is antagonistic and they will repel it, and don’t expect revivals as in the previous centuries, as in the time of Spurgeon.

After the rapture of the Church, the great tribulation will commence and then the gospel will be preached successfully to all the earth, and their response is vital. Then, if anyone is against Christ, he will die, and if they accept him, they will enter the Millennium. Revelation 11 speaks of the 144,000 people from each tribe of Israel who will effectively preach the gospel to the four corners of the world, enjoying great success. The gospel is widely preached but the world is parched, repelling the life-giving water.

The gospel is a direct fulfilment of all the clustered Old Testament promises to be fulfilled in the resurrected Christ. In the synagogue, Jesus reads from Isaiah 61: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’ Luke 4:18–19.

The gospel bears witness to every aspect of Christ’s saving work, from his

birth and public ministry, his death and resurrection, and his final return to earth. Christ's death and resurrection are the crucial saving events, the gospel's most prominent themes.
The Apostle Paul defines the gospel, saying it was promised beforehand through his prophets in the Scriptures; it concerns his Son, declared to be the Son of God upon his resurrection from the dead. Romans 1:1–4.
The fundamental truths of the gospel are rooted in the Old Testament. Therefore, a proper understanding is not possible without an insight into the Old Testament prophecies. The Book of Romans starts by saying the gospel of God was 'promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures'. The Apostle Paul says it is not his idea, but it is pre-planned by God himself. Rather, it comes to us directly from the Old Testament, which he refers to as the 'holy Scriptures'.
God promised the gospel in Genesis 3:15, right after the fall, when he said that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, or when God told Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. God intervened to provide the ram instead of Isaac. Throughout the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys, as in the Book of Acts, he reasons with the Jews from the Scriptures, trying to persuade them that Jesus is the promised Messiah. An example is when he visits Thessalonica: 'And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ. "' Acts 17:2–3.

Who are Christ's witnesses?
Titles have meaning and they transfer authority, and it hinges on credentials. Anyone can't call himself a doctor just because it sounds good. That is true particularly in the Church today, when some illegitimately claim to be an apostle.
The New Testament apostles were chosen by God and appointed to be witnesses of the risen Christ. When the Church was in its infancy, a detailed account is given to inaugurate a new apostle, since Judas died. In Acts 1:21–22, Peter declares that the new apostle needed to be someone who was associated with Christ, who had consistently sat under his teaching, and who had witnessed first-hand his ministry and life. In particular, he needed to have known Christ after his resurrection.
The twelve apostles held a unique position, and today there are none, as no one has first-hand experiences. Only the specially qualified apostles had the Great Commission, and the reason is:

- They witnessed the resurrected Christ. 1 Corinthians 9:1.
- Explicitly chosen by the Holy Spirit. Acts 9:15.
- And have the ability to perform both signs and wonders. Acts 2:43; 2 Corinthians 12:12.

Some believers today seek to restore the position of apostle. This is dangerous, and the people who claim the office of an apostle seek authority equal to, or at least rivalling, the authority of the original twelve apostles. The Apostle Paul warned us against false apostles. 2 Corinthians 11:13. Our Lord spoke to his twelve apostles when he said: 'But you will

receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' Acts 1:8.

The 40-day period between Christ's resurrection and his ascension was not uneventful. Throughout that time, he ministered to his disciples, and Acts 1 opens by mentioning this.

'In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.' Acts 1:1–4.

Christ appeared often to his apostles, to Mary Magdalene, the two disciples going to Emmaus; then to the ten disciples; he convinced Thomas on the eighth day; and afterwards he appeared to seven of his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; later to all the apostles; to 500 brethren at once on a mountain in Galilee; finally to James, his brother, alone. His ascension was in full view of his disciples when he ascended up to heaven. After his resurrection, he conversed with them, and since the Spirit of Christ was inside of them, they understood every word he spoke, remembering them. They needed no seminary, as the 40 days were ample preparation. Within one generation, the gospel was preached to the ends of the world.

Even though the Apostle Paul did not bear witness to Christ's full life and ministry – which is likely why he referred to himself as 'one untimely born' – he was no less a witness of the risen Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:8. In fact, Paul was made an apostle by virtue of his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:1–8. He didn't witness Christ's baptism, his miracles, his teaching or his crucifixion. He must have met Jesus but not the risen Christ before his conversion.

Moments before Christ's ascension to heaven, his eleven apostles posed a question and asked if in the near future he would restore the kingdom to Israel? Acts 1:6. The kingdom had been taken away for some time from the Jews, and Judea is reduced to a Roman province, run by a Roman governor. The Jewish people were in great expectation, thinking the Messiah would relieve them from the Roman yoke, and that the son of David would be king over them. The disciples expected a kingdom to be set up by Christ, even though his sufferings and death nearly destroyed all their hopes of an imminent kingdom.

So many issues were at stake, and our Lord could not answer them directly with a final 'yes' or 'no'. His answer was: 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.' Acts 1:7. Their responsibility is to preach the gospel – to be his witnesses. The 'yes or no' is measured by the response of the Jewish nations, whether they will accept or reject the message of Christ. Judah refused him, with the result that the throne of David is postponed for 2000 years.

He said nonetheless the Holy Spirit will 'come on them' and you cannot discern it. You can hear wind but you don't know where it comes from. On the day of Pentecost, flames like tongues were on them. They received the

Spirit on the day of Christ's resurrection, but on the day of Pentecost it was noticeable.
'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.' Acts 1:8. Their real mission is about to commence, to be witnesses commencing from Jerusalem, then Judea (2 tribes), Samaria (10 tribes) and to the end of the world. Note, in this verse, to be a witness for Christ was no direct command, but he merely reminded them, as in the same breath he promises the Spirit. It was a special privilege.
It's impossible for us to be witnesses of Christ in the same sense the apostles were. We did not see or touch our Lord as the apostles, and we cannot prove he exists today. We can only point them to the Scriptures to prove his existence. Once we do accept Christ, we can feel him working within us, but proving it to the world is deemed foolish.
The apostles are the true witnesses.
The Apostle John was a perfect witness, and he opened his letter saying: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it.' 1 John 1:1–2. And the Word became 'flesh' and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14. The words 'became flesh' are the promises of the Old Testament, realised in the resurrected Christ.
The Apostle Peter wrote of the experiences he had of Jesus on the Mount of the Transfiguration, saying he heard a voice from heaven saying: 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.' 2 Peter 1:16–18. The unbelieving world will never see the resurrected Christ until he appears in glory. The true witnesses, the apostles, were essential, living proof that he was resurrected and he ate food as they did, and he was no holographic fallacy. He must have reasoned with them as he did with the two men going to Emmaus. Luke 24. They looked at his hands and feet, and they touched him and even saw him eating fish. He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, making them grasp the importance of the third day when he resurrected. After this, Christ again appears to all the disciples and then Thomas was present. John 20:26–31. Later he appears to the seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. John 21:1–25. To about 500 disciples in Galilee. 1 Corinthians 15:6. And to his half-brother James. 1 Corinthians 15:7. Before our Lord was crucified, he taught twelve disciples how to witness, sending them in pairs to evangelise the people. He was particular about the outreach and who to reach.
It says: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, raise the dead, and cleanse the lepers, casting out the demons.' Matthew 10:5–8.
Christ's command to the apostles is misinterpreted, making us think the apostles need to avoid the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but they are only allowed to visit the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matthew 10:5–7. A very unusual command to the twelve apostles. It seems to oppose the

great drift of the Book, as the complete Book of Mark involves Samaria and Galilee, and Jesus only visited Jerusalem in his final week.
The reason for the misunderstanding is that many Bible students have no clue who the ‘lost sheep’ are. Later in the Book of Matthew 15:24, there is another mention of the ‘lost sheep’ when Jesus is tied in with conversing with a Canaanite woman. It reads: ‘But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ’
Most Bible commentators and students think Matthew 10 is all about the Jewish nations and the other tribes are left out of the equation. Did the twelve disciples avoid the ten tribes of Israel? Aren’t the Jewish people the ‘lost sheep’? How bizarre, as the apostles did visit Samaria.
It is easy to explain the ‘lost sheep’ in Matthew 10, once we debunk the idea that the apostles did not set foot in Samaria. They were told to visit Samaria, and their main task was to seek the ‘lost sheep’ who were dispersed amongst them. The ‘lost sheep’ are the ten lost tribes of Israel scattered amongst the Gentile people. With the Great Commission, the disciples’ mission was to first preach the gospel to Jerusalem, then the Jewish people, Samaria (lost sheep) and finally the Gentile people.
The phrasing of Matthew 10:5 may seem strange. It is like saying, ‘I don’t want the chips with the tomato sauce, but I do fancy the chips.’ The apostles’ first mission was the ‘lost sheep’, avoiding the Gentile people, to later reach them as in the history of the Book of Acts.
There are several reasons why our Saviour’s words baffle and confuse many Bible students. First, they have no concept of the true meaning of the term ‘the house of Israel’. They insist that this phrase is identical in meaning to the single word ‘Israel’. If that is true, then why did Christ tag the words ‘house of’ to his command? It never occurs to them that when Christ referred to ‘the house of Israel’, he really meant the ten-tribe kingdom, who are generally named and known by the prophets. The Old Testament prophets have more than 100 references to the ‘house of Israel’ since the time when they disappeared into the Assyrian captivity, and more than 50 times they are referred to as ‘Ephraim’. Not easily brushed under the carpet.
Many students reason the ten tribes of Israel were never ‘lost’. Others say that the Bible is correct and that Israel was exiled in the Assyrian captivity, but a little later ‘they all’ returned to be soaked up by the Jewish people. Therefore, we are told that there are no exiled or lost tribes of Israel anywhere in the world. Yet Christ referred to an Israel that was still ‘lost’ in his day!
An even greater confusion exists today over Jesus’ statement that the kingdom of God was ‘at hand’. It is in contradiction to modern theology, who reason Christ’s kingdom is pending due to the world’s rejection of our Saviour by all of Israel. However, if all of Israel did not reject the Saviour – if some tribes of them, like the ten lost tribes of Israel, did accept the Christian faith when the apostles reached them with the gospel – then the rationale for the ‘postponement of the kingdom’ is removed entirely. Indeed, ‘God has rescued us from the power of darkness and has brought us into the kingdom of his Son, whom he loves.’ Colossians 1:13. His

promises are cherished in the Church today, and the world is left in the dark. The kingdom did commence, and we are part of it today.
In the future, the two houses of Israel (Ephraim and Judah) will unite at the end of Daniel's 70th week. It will happen soon after the Day of the Lord, when the house of Judah is the first nation to accept Christ as a nation, followed by the remaining tribes of Israel. At the end of Daniel's 70th week, Judah will repent when Christ sets his feet on the Mount of Olives. On their footsteps are the ten lost tribes of Israel, and thus the many verses reiterate the order of their ministry: first Jerusalem, then Judah, followed by Samaria and then the ends of the world.
Today is different, as throughout our dispensation of grace, Joseph accepted Christ more readily than Judah. Christ is working on the quiet, and while the house of Israel is considered as missing and 'lost', he is doing a grand work. Many believe that the house of Israel will only be regathered totally at the dawn of the Millennium, but I believe it is realised in the Church today. How wonderful and mysterious is God's working, and Moses once said: 'Thou (Israel) shalt become an astonishment.' Deuteronomy 28:37.
The twelve apostles did visit Samaria, and they were leprous, blind and sick, and they had many demons. The ill people project the miserable state of the ten lost tribes of Israel who were abandoned for 700 years in the Assyrian captivity, unlike the 70 years the Jewish people suffered in the Babylonian captivity. Each time our Lord healed the sick, the lame, deaf and blind, it pictures the lost tribes of Israel in dire need of healing. In the synoptic Gospels, all of Jesus' ministries were in Galilee, but in his last week – the Passion Week – it ended in Jerusalem, dreading the cross. Why send his twelve apostles to Judea? The 'lost sheep' are not in Judea but in Galilee. They knew who the 'lost sheep' were, and whilst in their search for them, they were forbidden to reach the Gentile people who did not descend from the ten lost tribes of Israel.
.

There are classic examples in Scripture where it is easy to misunderstand the writer. James was one of them when he writes: 'My brethren, do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus, the glorious Christ, with respect of persons.' (James 2:1) How odd it seems to say, 'Do not have the faith of our Lord Jesus.' But there is a clause—'with respect of persons.' I hope it clears the misunderstanding. To phrase Matthew 10:5 differently, we can say the disciples were prompted to go to Samaria or the Gentile nations, with the understanding that they were to reach the 'lost sheep'. It was the main reason to visit their cities.
The apostles told them, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!' Our Lord and John the Baptist spoke of the same kingdom of God that is imminent or in the making. With Christ's resurrection, the kingdom commenced, but we cannot discern it with our eyes or senses. We know we are part of it, and the unbelieving world is oblivious. The general consensus of most theologians and believers is in limbo, in anticipation of His kingdom. At the time of John the Baptist, the kingdom was shaped but

realised with Christ's resurrection from the dead. We are part of it, and our convictions are not based on our senses, but on the solid Word of God. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:13) We used to be far away, both blind and sick, but now we are brought near to be totally part of His kingdom, presently in heaven.

The Witnesses in the Early Church

Multiple times the apostles said they were the true witnesses of Christ's resurrection, as on the occasion when the Apostle Peter healed a lame man. He said they killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. 'To this we are witnesses.' (Acts 3:15) The apostles met real opposition when they were thrown in jail, but they escaped miraculously. Facing the council members of the temple, who previously crucified Jesus, they said they were true witnesses to prove that Christ did resurrect. (Acts 5:32) They were in awe and commanded them to keep quiet. The apostles obeyed God, continuing their mission.

When the Apostle Paul met Cornelius and the Gospel went to the Gentile nations, he defined who the true witnesses are: 'And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.' (Acts 10:39-44)

The apostles were the true witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and once their generation died, there were no true witnesses left. The seed is sown, and the New Testament is written; our only convictions are based on our faith in the living Word. Don't expect God to give you faith, as each of us needs to decide if we trust His written Word or not.

There are two great sermons in the Book of Acts, and they are Acts 2 and 13. In chapter 13, the Apostle Paul addressed the proconsul at Cyprus, and a Jewish magician who tried to hinder Paul was blinded. They paid greater attention to the Apostles Paul and Barnabas. They assured the people Christ's resurrection is certain, as many men accompanied our Lord from Galilee to Jerusalem. There were many women amongst them, and to each of them the risen Christ appeared, to be His true witnesses. (Acts 13:31-32)

The next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the Apostle Paul. When the Jews saw the crowds, it sparked great jealousy, and they began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, insulting him.

He rebuked the Jewish leaders and said the Gospel had to be preached first to the Jews, but since you reject Christ, refusing eternal life, He is now turning to the Gentiles—and then he quotes Isaiah.

One of the main themes of the Book of Acts is that the Gospel is proclaimed to and received by the Gentile people, but to the Jews, the

Gospel was a great offence. The Gentile nations were joyous and accepted Christ, but the ruling Jews were up in arms.

Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, “I have set you (10 lost tribes of Israel) to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. ”’ (Isaiah 42/49:6)

It is a direct quote from Isaiah, and we need to study both Isaiah 42 and 49, as they are pivotal to understanding this chapter. The Gentile people were glad and readily accepted Christ, but who are the people Isaiah is talking about, who were enchanted by the message of Christ?

Both Isaiah 42 and 49 speak of a ‘sea-faring people’ (42:10) who patiently waited for God’s grace ‘in the isles’ and the outlying far ‘coasts of the earth’.

The prophecies are addressed to them, and they are known as ‘the servants of God’ (42:1,19), speaking of a time to come (42:9) when they are to declare His praise in the islands, as the Apostle Paul did at Antioch (42:12). They were spiritually blind and deaf (42:7,18), shut up in prison in looming spiritual darkness (42:7,22). They were lamented for 700 years in the Assyrian captivity, robbed of their spiritual heritage, and they did not understand their calamity (42:24-25). When they served their sentence, amidst great upheavals, the Lord God, like a mighty man, will rescue His servants and regather them to the ‘ways of Truth they have not known’ (42:3,13,16). He will reveal to them that they were called for a holy and righteous purpose, and will restore them to their original title, to be a ‘Covenant of the People’ (42:6) —or better said in English, Brit-am. Israel will be a Brit-Am, and in the Middle Ages, Britain is sometimes referred to as Britannia!

In spite of their unfaithfulness, apostasy, and waywardness, God will always keep His side of the Covenant, and He will restore both houses of Israel. The 10 tribes of Israel will not be forgotten, as Isaiah once said: ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me.’ (Isaiah 49:16)

Even though the 10 lost tribes of Israel settled primarily to the West, threatened by the great migration routes across Europe and Asia, the good news is they will prosper greatly because they embrace Joseph’s firstborn right. His blessings are unconditional. His birthright blessings are cherished in the Church today in our dispensation of grace.

Their migration and sea-faring skills made them settle at the continental extremities and ‘coasts’ of the earth, such as North America, the British Isles, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. (Deuteronomy 33:13)

But thou, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend; Thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the uttermost parts thereof, and said unto

thee: ‘Thou art My servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away.’ (Isaiah 41:8-9)
Yea, He saith: ‘It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the offspring of Israel; I will also give thee for a light of the nations, that My salvation may be unto the end of the earth.’ (Isaiah 49:6)
In the well-known parable of the prodigal son, the younger son receives his inheritance when he leaves his father. He wasted it speedily and, like many of us today, buying lovers and drink, he soon felt neglected and forgotten. He came to his senses in a pigsty, and he regretted his waste and said: ‘Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have been bereaved of my children, and am solitary, an exile, and wandering to and fro?’ (Isaiah 49:21) The prodigal son sensed his real calling in life, and he returned to the father to claim his bounty.
Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken, ye peoples. Pay attention, you who are far away! The Lord called me before my birth; … He said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, and will bring you to glory.’ The prodigal son replied, ‘But my work seems so useless; I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose. Yet I leave it all in the Lord’s hand; I will trust God for my reward.’ (Isaiah 49:1-4)
The Lord honoured the prodigal son or any person who accepts Christ in the far-away countries.
Israel’s overall duty is to be God’s ‘living testimony’. Somehow the Church today is involved with the great commission as a living testimony as to who Christ is and what His word says about Himself.
He is the only God, and all His covenants to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David are unconditional, whether the 2 or 10 tribes of Israel are obedient or not. We are the ‘living testimony’ of God, and He is working in us. That is the reason why we were called to be ‘a covenant of the people / Brit-Am’ (42:6), and our ethnic background does not matter. If we are part of the Church, then we are His people. God’s plan for us is to draw all Israel unto Himself; therefore, we are His shining lights in a dark, dark world. (Isaiah 43:10-12) Mark 16:16He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be condemned.
As with any verse in the Bible, we ought to study its context, especially when touching a sensitive issue like baptism. The question is whether baptism is essential for our salvation? The Bible is pretty clear that salvation is secured by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by any of our works, including baptism. (Ephesians 2:8-9) So, baptism, or any other of our works, will never achieve our salvation. Faith alone is needed for salvation (John 3:18; 5:24; 12:44; 20:31; 1 John 5:13), and baptism is to comply with God’s counsel.
The verse simply says: he who believes and is baptised will be saved, and the people who do not believe will be condemned. It tells us something about believers who have been baptised, but nothing about believers who refused baptism. The positive is whoever believes in Christ is saved, and the negative is the people who refuse Him are condemned due to their unbelief.

The moment we believe in the Resurrected, we have eternal life (John 5:24), and belief always comes before being baptised. Baptism does not save us.

The real purpose of baptism is to identify ourselves with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and John the Baptist is not the first to stir the subject. The Jews practised baptism as a traditional deed of purification and the initiation of Gentile converts to Judaism. It might be found in the book of Leviticus, where the Levite priests were instructed to symbolically cleanse themselves in water before and after performing their priestly duties. (Leviticus 16:4; 23-24) The Levites baptised (bathed) themselves, but the baptism of John is different, as he baptised them.

To the Jews, it was a totally new concept to involve another person to baptise you. Even though the Old Testament passages did not specifically name it 'baptism', it does highlight how important ceremonial cleansing is to God. John's 'baptism of repentance' is to foreshadow our baptism, to symbolise our association with Christ's death and resurrection, to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)

There were some religious leaders like the Pharisees who went to the river Jordan to study John's ministry, but they refused the invitation to step into the water to be baptised. John rebuked them, saying they too needed to repent of their sin, but they refused his invitation. John's baptism foreshadowed what Jesus will accomplish with His death and resurrection. John's baptism is meant to ready the people's hearts to accept Christ.

The Old Testament cleansing is tied to the old covenant, and the invitation of John the Baptist is to alert the religious leaders like the Pharisees to be willing to embrace a totally new covenant and disregard the old. John said the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: 'Repent ye, and believe the gospel.' (Mark 1:15)

The new covenant commenced, and the Apostle Paul, as John the Baptist, spurred the people to be reconciled to God. The Jews used to baptise themselves, but now we need 'someone' to baptise us.

God has removed all the obstacles to reconcile us to Himself, and He opened a new way. He did everything He could, and now it is our turn to embrace the terms of His mercy, to be totally reconciled to God, fearing no reprisal.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) If God reconciled all things unto Himself by Jesus Christ, then Calvinism or predestination makes no sense. As far as God is concerned, Christ defeated all things, and He reconciled us and the world unto God. Our penalty of sin and the sins of the world are forgiven, and we can face God, found complete in Christ. (Colossians 2:10) To reject God's offer of reconciliation is to reject God and His Son Jesus Christ, forfeiting our chance of eternal life. We need to make a firm decision for or against Christ, and if we do refuse His helping hand, then we are condemned.

The religious leaders like the Pharisees sat on the side of the river Jordan, and they listened to John's words. They should have responded to be baptised. God's kingdom was in the making, to be accomplished with Christ's resurrection from the dead.

We are not given ‘faith’ by God to believe. Sadly, many churches today refuse to endorse the good news of the Gospel, reasoning God predestined certain people to destruction and others to life. The fortunate will be ‘given’ faith to accept Christ, and others are not that privileged. So why bother to evangelise the world if everything is in God’s hand? How wrong. They love to quote 1 Corinthians 12:8-9: ‘For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.

’The Apostle Paul addressed his letter to a church and not the unbelievers, who are not in the equation. The word ‘faith’ can also be translated as trust and faithfulness (Strong’s no. 4102). Some Christians are unreliable, too busy or occupied by other things, incapable of holding any office. The older we become, the more set we become in our ways, finding it more difficult to comply with the new. Young children are more pliable, and they believe in the things they are taught, easier to be approached by the Gospel. It is easier to believe than to not believe. Satan asked Eve a simple question—‘Did God really mean this?’ It is easier to accept the Gospel in faith than to reject it, but the more difficult the older we become.

In Acts 2:38-41, the new believers were baptised after they accepted Christ. The Apostle Peter said they had to repent to be baptised for the forgiveness of sins—in tune with Mark 16:16—but a prerequisite is to believe in Christ before baptism. 3,000 people were added to the church that day.

However, it does not say when or where they were baptised, and I doubt it was on the day of Pentecost. The river Jordan is 21 miles away—enough water to baptise each of them.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told them, ‘Repent, (and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ,) for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ’

The placement of the comma in this verse is vital, as the words ‘and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ’ ought to be in brackets. Then it is easier to understand the verse.

Baptism is not the core of the Apostle Peter’s message, but repentance is. The first letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians opened with many disputes, and baptism seemed to be one of the issues. The Apostle Paul said he was not bothered who was baptised by him at Corinth, and he could only remember two men and one household he baptised. Baptism seems to draw you into a church, forcing you to become members, and thus the many denominations. Child baptism gets them into the church registry. God did not send the Apostle Paul to baptise but to preach the Gospel. (1 Corinthians 1:14-17)

If we do baptise any person—then we do it for the sake of Christ, as they are baptised by Him alone. We are mere vessels, and John the Baptist said he ought to be baptised by Jesus Christ, as each of us must demonstrate our faith in Him and no church organisation. There are multiple verses in the Bible to stress the importance of our faith, and very little is written about baptism.

Baptism is a personal matter between us and God. It is best to be baptised as early as possible to comply with His will. There is little question that baptism is not optional once we accept Christ. The early Christians obeyed God, and it was virtually the first thing they did, as with Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Philippian jailer who was baptised, including his household.

‘When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they declared God to be just, having been baptised with John’s baptism. But the Pharisees and the Law scholars rejected the counsel of God, not being baptised by him themselves.’ (Luke 7:29-30)

In general, the religious insiders rejected Jesus’ invitation to repent, but the outsiders, who knew they were sinners, readily accepted the invitation to be freed from their sinful bondage. Once we accept Christ, we have a personal relationship with God, and the least we can do is to accept the counsel of God. If we refuse to be baptised, then we refuse the counsel of God, and it will hamper our spiritual growth—how, I cannot say. It is a personal matter, and no third party is involved. The counsel of God is to destroy the old, and it is embodied when we descend into the waters; once we raise from the waters, we are resurrected to a new life. The old is gone and forgotten.

‘When God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ship was being built. In it, few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’ (1 Peter 3:20-21) As the ark was God’s decree and not man’s invention, likewise baptism is decreed in heaven and not man-made. While Noah was building the ark, the people scorned and ridiculed him, and today is no different. The ordinance (baptism) of the Gospel is ridiculed to be supplanted by child baptism. It was rejected by the scribes and Pharisees, and by most theologians today. The ark has a solid message, and when Noah and his family entered the ark to be shut by God, it portrays our burial with Christ—a lively emblem of baptism. The great deep beneath them opened up, and the windows of heaven poured upon them, and they were literally covered with water, to portray our immersion in the waters. The priests of the Old Testament had to cleanse themselves, putting away the filth of the flesh, but our baptism has a new facet: the resurrection of Christ. To be baptised, we have a good conscience towards God, following His counsel. We are unlike the scoffers who will not surface from the deep waters.

Mark 16:17–18

And these signs shall follow those that believe: In my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; and they will pick up snakes with their hands. Even if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; and they’ll place their hands on the sick, and they’ll recover.

Signs and Wonders

Our God is a God of wonders (Psalm 136:3-4), our creator and sustainer of life. He has the power to defy all natural laws in order to fulfil His

purposes. Miracles mostly happened during the time of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, followed by their followers who were Joshua, Elisha, and Christ's apostles. The purpose of the miracles is primarily to confirm their message as coming from God.

It proved the prophets were God's, and our Lord's miracles are conclusive proof of His divine mission. (John 5:20, 36; 10:25, 38) Nicodemus approached our Lord at night and said: 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.' (John 3:2) Signs and wonders are different: the breaking of bread and baptism are signs but not wonders. The Apostle Paul summarises the steps of our great salvation: It was first spoken through the Lord, confirmed to us by those who heard (apostles) ; and God endorsed their message with both signs and wonders, by various works of His power, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will. (Hebrews 2:3-4) In the early church history, the Jewish people sought signs and wonders because they wanted confirmation of the truth of God. There is nothing inherently wrong with this desire. In fact, God willingly gave signs to Moses (Exodus 4:1-9) and Gideon (Judges 6:11-22) to confirm His word. Miracles did aid the early Christians to accept Christ, as John 2:23 said: 'Many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. '

The Pharisees of Matthew 12 saw Jesus performing miracles for quite some time, and a group of scribes and Pharisees came to Him and demanded a sign from heaven. In response to their request, God did the signs via His apostles, but it did not exercise their faith. In spite of the many signs and wonders, they did not believe. (Psalm 78:32)

Just before Christ is taken up into heaven, He is speaking directly to His 11 apostles. He told them He will depart and not leave them vulnerable. The signs the scribes and Pharisees demanded will be executed by the apostles, and they will evangelise the world. Christ is clearly speaking to His 11 apostles who are powered by the signs and miracles they did. There is no evidence to suggest the other believers had such power. What happened is when the word was first preached, signs and wonders followed to validate the apostles to steer the church in its infancy. In much the same way, Jesus' miracles were to validate His message. The Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders. (Acts 14:3) Their focus was to build the church centred on God's Word, not looking for the power to do miracles. The Book of Mark ends saying they went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord was working mightily in them, confirming the Word through the accompanying signs. Signs, wonders, and miracles are not meant for the Christians who accepted Christ. The very reason for the signs and miracles is to confirm to the Jewish people that there was a change of leadership, taken from them who refused Christ, to be entrusted to the 10 lost tribes of Israel who accepted Him more readily. The signs and wonders were entrusted to those who spent time with Jesus. It triggered fear amongst the onlookers on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:43) The Bible is clear it was specifically done through God's appointed apostles, the same people God used to write the Scriptures. Throughout the Bible, the emphasis is not on the

signs but on the message they preach. The apostles never intended to attract the multitudes. There were apostolic legates who were commissioned by the apostles personally, such as Stephen in Acts 6:8, who did miracles, and he became the first martyr.

The believers who are spiritual are encouraged to examine the teachings of men, especially when they are accompanied by miracles. Today, many people seek miraculous signs and will go to great lengths to have an experience. Don't be lured by them. We are clearly living in the time of the great falling away preceding the revelation of the antichrist, the man of sin. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) Especially at a time like today, we need to be sure we are not deceived or lured away by the false prophets. (1 John 4:1) Christ Jesus said there will be great polarisation among righteous and unrighteous people in the end times. The Apostle Paul warns us in the last days the church will be removed from the solid faith, and he encourages us not to abandon our doctrine of faith, not to be on the 'lookout' for signs and miracles. If we are strong in faith, we do not need them to stimulate our faith. You don't need to be convinced of God's power. I believe we are more blessed today than ever before, as we believe Christ's Word, not based on any signs or miracles. (John 20:29) If we look at the people who have had supernatural experiences, we'll discover when their signs and wonders cease, their faith ceases too. They believed because they saw, but they did not have true faith. It is shallow, having no foundations. Scripture and history prove that signs and wonders do not instil faith; just the opposite. Lack of faith prompts people's desire to see more signs and wonders. The Old Testament prophets performed miracles in the sight of kings, priests, and the enemies of Israel. Yet rather than instilling faith, it made them all the more jealous, causing many prophets to die. Signs and wonders were given to Israel's enemy over and over, but it never changed Pharaoh's mind. Israel's wilderness journey was no different. Every day God provided the manna, yet they provoked Him to do more miracles. Throughout the church's history, the persecuted church proved the martyrs enhanced the faith of the true believers.

Remember, all the Israelites died in the wilderness due to their unbelief, except for Joshua and Caleb. Their unbelief was in spite of the persuasive signs and wonders done before their very eyes, ever since they crossed the Red Sea. We learn from approximately 340 or more recorded miracles in the Bible that the reaction of the people was mainly downbeat, making them hate the prophets all the more.

Expect to see more miracles, and they are clear warning signs. The Apostle Paul says: 'Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.' (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)

We are warned of false apostles—people who claim to be authorised by God to do many miracles. In very much the same way, God warned Jeremiah of the false prophets, ensuring him He did not send or speak to them. There are numerous warnings in Scripture (Matthew 7:21-22) as many people will stand in tears before the Lord, claiming: 'Did I not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, and do many

wonders?' The Lord will say, 'I never knew you.' They tried to approach God on their own merit, and they failed to understand: it was not about power, but all about knowing Him.
We are approaching a time when the antichrist and his false prophets will appear and show great signs and wonders to deceive many, and if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:24) I firmly believe it will be minutes after the rapture of the church. The people today who claim to be apostles say they are spiritually bonded with God in heaven, and they don't need the Scriptures. How foolish.
'They Shall Speak with New Tongues'
Biblical tongues were real earthly languages, and not any sort of garbled mutterings. The first time we read of speaking in tongues in the New Testament is in Acts 2. Here we see that the gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to speak in a language that one had never learned. It is like me speaking fluent Chinese in a dialect they understand. 'Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.' (Acts 2:6) At least 14 or 15 different languages are mentioned, and they were known earthly languages spoken by men in that day; the apostles spoke them fluently, even though it was not their native tongue. There is no reason to believe that the gift of tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is any different from the speaking in tongues as mentioned in the Book of Acts.
We only read of the 'speaking in tongues' in the Book of Acts (19:6), and the only other time is in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14. The Apostle Paul says that tongues are an earthly language. One of the clearest evidences from the Bible that speaking in tongues is not for today is that the Apostle Paul only rebuked them as carnally minded and worldly. They were 'babes in Christ.' (1 Corinthians 3:1) The heresy of tongues had crept into the church at Corinth, and God put it in Paul's heart to expose this wicked practice.
The speaking in tongues in the Book of Acts is a sign to the Jewish nation —a tip-off—as from now, God is chiefly speaking to a people from another tongue and not the Hebrew language. The New Testament is written in Greek, and the Gospel will go to all the nations in whatever tongue they preached the Gospel.
'For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to "this people" (Jewish nation). To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.' (Isaiah 28:11-12)
The miraculous tongues were a sign to the unbelieving Jews that God is indeed speaking to all nations of the world, inviting them into His new spiritual body composed of both Jews and Gentiles. 'This people' refers to the Jewish nation to whom the prophet Isaiah was speaking.
Each time we read of the 'tongues' in the Book of Acts, the Jews were present. (Acts 2:6-11; 10:46; 19:6) On the day of Pentecost and in Acts 19, it was the Jews themselves who spoke in tongues.
The Bible plainly states that tongues are not a sign to believers. The speaking in tongues today causes many arguments, claiming the

‘speaking in tongues’ is to enhance our spiritual growth. Clearly, the Apostle Paul says the opposite. (1 Corinthians 14:20-22)
The Apostle Paul said even if he spoke in a language the angels speak, and he did not have love, it would profit him nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1)
Speaking in tongues is not an angelic language. Speaking in tongues is an ancient practice—pagan—and it’s not purely Christian
As for tongues, the Book of Acts mentions Christians who are filled with the Spirit. Tongues are only mentioned once in this context. In Acts 2:4, the disciples were filled with the Spirit and they spoke in tongues, but elsewhere they were filled with the Spirit and did not speak in tongues. It’s ridiculous to reason that speaking in tongues is evidence of us being filled with the Holy Spirit. The duty of the Holy Spirit is solely to edify Christ, and not itself.

Snakes Will Be Lifted
When the Apostle Paul and other prisoners survived a stormy sea (Acts 28:1), they landed at Malta. The natives of the country showed them extraordinary kindness, kindling a fire for them. When Paul gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came and fastened on his hand. It happened accidentally. The natives figured out that since Paul had been bitten by this viper, then he must have been a murderer who managed to survive the shipwreck, and he was meant to die from the snake. Justice would prevail. But after they had waited a long time and noticed nothing unusual, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god. He was then privileged to meet Publius, ‘the leading man of the island’. He provided for the care of all the 276 people who survived the shipwreck. Publius’ kindness was soon returned to him by Paul, who healed his ill father who was very ill with bleeding intestines—possibly chronic ulcerative colitis or haemophilia. Afterwards, the people on the island who were ill went to the Apostle Paul to be cured. The miracles he did, as elsewhere, opened a hearing for Paul to tell them about the Gospel and their forgiveness of sin in Christ Jesus. Tradition holds that the church on Malta was started at this time and that Publius became its first pastor. I believe the experiences of the Apostle Paul are a foretaste of what happened to another island, namely Britain. Tradition holds their king was receptive to Christ’s message.
The other sign is that the snake or Satan is thrown into the fire, and he has no hold on us. We are freed, but we do face him each day. All the miracles our Lord performed at Galilee foreshadow our dispensation—what Christ is doing for us right now.
We were forsaken, doomed, and lost, and due to God’s grace we are healed; and all the healings accomplished by the apostles, the speaking of tongues, is clear evidence that God is working via the lost tribes of Israel. He is speaking to the Jewish people in ‘stammering lips’ to provoke them to jealousy, with the intent to win them for Christ.

All the miracles the apostles did are proof of Christ's resurrection. Christ never revealed Himself to the unbelieving world, but He did speak via the signs and the wonders the apostles did.
Their purpose is to foreshadow our dispensation and not the great tribulation. The great sign our Lord was talking about when He ascended into heaven is Him returning with the church on the Day of the Lord, on the Mount of Olives. Then the Jewish nations will be flabbergasted, spotting the church who will always accompany Christ.
The signs of the two witnesses during the great tribulation will be different. I don't believe they will perform miracles to heal the deaf and blind, as the signs portray our dispensation of grace; but theirs is more sinister, like the changing of the water into blood and possibly causing droughts, as Moses and Elijah did.

Mark 16:19 – 20
So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. And they, going forth, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with the signs which followed them. Amen.
It is a direct quote of Psalm 110:1: 'The Lord says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." 'No other passage from the Old Testament is quoted more frequently by New Testament authors than this verse. Thus, this citation should caution us to pay special attention to what is being said. It is quoted at least 25 times in the New Testament – but it is also the most debated verse.
In almost every instance, the New Testament authors associate this verse with Christ's death and resurrection. For instance, Peter too proclaims this in the first sermon after Jesus' ascension. Acts 2:32–36: 'Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.' By raising Christ from the dead, He is both Lord and Messiah, to reign over his enemies until they are made his footstool. The resurrection raised Christ above every ruler, authority, and power, and all the old are destroyed. Satan and his hierarchy is stripped from all its power, placed beneath Christ's feet. Col. 2:15: Christ is more than a mere physical descendant of David.
In the minds of most Christians, people think Christ Jesus has an inferior position to God the Father. We have seen pictures of a large throne in heaven with a lesser throne to its right. The larger throne is, to some, the throne of God and the smaller is for Christ. That picture suggests that somehow Jesus Christ is less than God, which, of course, is impossible, as Jesus Christ is God. If we picture Christ sitting at the right hand of God, then why does Psalm 110:5 contradict 110:1? Verse 5 says God Jehovah is seated at the right hand! 'Right hand' in the Hebrew is translated from the Hebrew word yamiyn (Strong's no. 3225) and it is related to the word miyn (Strong's no. 4327), meaning of its own 'kind' or 'sort'. Genesis 1 is familiar to most people and the first time the word 'kind' is mentioned is in verse 24: 'And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the

ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind. ”’ Now it’s easier to understand that Jehovah and Adonai are of the same kind. There is no rivalry as to who is sitting on the left or on the right.